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Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an

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The study and knowledge of the Qur'an is essential for every learned person as well as for all faithful believers. It is specially essential for those scholars who are interested in the study of man and society, since this book has been effectively instrumental not only in moulding the destinies of Islamic societies, but also in shaping the destiny of the human race as a whole. A brief glance over history would be enough to provide sufficient proof of the claim that there has been no such book that has ever influenced human societies to the magnitude of the Qur'an. It is for the same reason that the Qur'an automatically steps into the precincts of sociological discussions, and becomes the elemental constituent of the subjects of research in this discipline. This means that any deep study and profound research in the field of world history of the last fourteen hundred years, is impossible without the knowledge of the Qur'an.

The study of the Qur'an is essential for every committed Muslim, since it is the main source and foundation of the religious thought and faith. Whatsoever gives meaning, essence and sanctity to his existence lies in the Holy Qur'an.

The Qur'an is not just like other religious books which are content to discuss the problems of existence of God and creation in cryptic tones, or like those which merely convey a series of simple moral advice and counsels, so that those who believe in them are hopelessly left to search for guidance in other sources. Unlike such books the Qur'an formulates the tenets of faith besides communicating the ideas and views that are essential for a man of faith and belief. Similarly, it also lays down the principles of moral and ethical values for the purpose

of social and familial existence. It leaves the job of explanation, interpretation, and occasionally that of ijtihad and application of principles (usul) to secondary matters (furu') to be dealt with through ijtihad and sunnah. Accordingly, utilization of any other source depends on the prior knowledge of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the criterion and standard for judging all other sources. We should judge hadith and sunnah in the light of the Qur'an. We can accept it only when it is in accordance with the Qur'an, otherwise we do not accept it.

There are four more books that come after the Qur'an, and are regarded as the most sacred and the most authentic sources (by the Shi'ah Muslims). They are: Al-Kafi, Man la yahduruhu al-faqih, Tahdhib, and Istibsar. There are also other sources like the Nahj al-Balaghah, and the prayers of al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah. All these books are secondary to the Qur'an, and their authenticity of source is not so absolute as that of the Qur'an. A hadith from al-Kafi is as trustworthy as it may be in conformity with the Qur'an, and reliable so far as its words comply with the teachings of the Qur'an and do not go against it. The Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams have said that their traditions should be checked in the light of the Qur'an; if they do not coincide with the words of the Qur'an, they should be regarded as false and fake, and as being wrongfully attributed to them; since they have not said anything that can go against the Qur'anic teachings.

Approaches to the Understanding of the Qur'an

Now that the necessity of understanding the Qur'an has been confirmed, let us see what are the ways of understanding this book. Generally for the purpose of a profound understanding of any book it is necessary to study it in three ways:

1. Authentication:

At this stage, we want to know to what extent the relationship of a book with its author is authentic. Suppose we want to study the Diwan-Hafiz, or the Ruba'iyyat of 'Umar Khayyam. At first, we have to see whether the work which is attributed to Hafiz, wholly belongs to him, or whether a part of it is Hafiz's work and the rest is an apocryphal annexation to it. Similarly in the case of 'Umar Khayyam, and others too, we must judiciously scrutinize their works. It is here that the matter of examination of manuscripts --and for that matter the oldest of them--becomes relevant. Thus we see that none of these books can dispense with such a treatment. The Diwan-e-Hafiz printed by the late Qazvini, which has been based on some of the most authentic manuscripts of Hafiz's work, varies greatly from the ordinary editions of Hafiz. printed in Iran and Bombay, which are usually found in homes. The editions of Hafiz's works published during the last thirty or forty years contain as much as twice the amount of Hafiz's original works. In view of certain modern manuscript experts of repute, they are fake; although we occasionally come across in them some verses which match the sublime heights of Hafiz's poetry. Likewise when we study the quatrains attributed to 'Umar Khayyam, we

shall find nearly two hundred quatrains of the same poetical standard with only minor differences usually possible even among the authentic verses of a single poet. However, if we look back at the history of Khayyam's times, we shall notice that the number of quatrains attributed to him may perhaps be less than twenty. The authenticity of the rest of them is either doubtful, or may with certainty be said to belong to other poets.

It means that the first step towards the research study of any book is to see to what extent the book in our hands is authentic, whether all the things recorded on its pages are genuine, or if only a part of it is authentic. Moreover, what criteria and standards should be employed in order to judge the authenticity and genuineness of authorship? By what logic can the authenticity of any book be totally rejected or affirmed?

The Qur'an is absolutely exempt from all such criteria that may be applicable to all worldly books. It is regarded as the exclusively singular book since the ancient times. No book of ancient days has remained above doubt to such extent despite a long lapse of several hundred years. No one can ever say about it that such and such a surah has a questionable authenticity or such and such a verse that is present in such and such a manuscript is missing from another manuscript. The Qur'an stands above the notions of manuscript reading. There is no place for the slightest doubt that all of the verses that exist in the Qur'an are those conveyed to Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah (S) who communicated them as the miraculous Word of God. Nobody can ever claim that another version of the Qur'an existed anywhere, or still exists. There has not been any Orientalist either who would begin the study of the Qur'an by saying, "let us trace from the earliest of the manuscripts of the Qur'an to see what was included in it and what was not." The Qur'an is absolutely free from this kind of investigation necessary in case of such books as the Bible, the Torah, or the Avesta, or the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, or the Gulistan of Sa'di and every other ancient or not so ancient work.

Only for the study of the Qur'an no such questions arise, and the Qur'an is far above the usual norms of authenticity and the craft of manuscript reading. Moreover, besides the fact that the Qur'an is one of the heavenly scriptures and has been regarded by its followers as the most basic and authentic proof of the Prophet's (S) claim to prophethood, and as the greatest of his miracles, the Qur'an, unlike the Torah, was not revealed at one time and was not subject to later difficulties in distinguishing the true manuscript. The verses of the Qur'an were revealed gradually during a span of twenty-three years. From the very first day, the eager Muslims memorized its verses, preserved and recorded them. Those were the days when the Muslim society was quite a simple society. No other book existed besides the Qur'an, and the Muslims were inevitably inclined to memorize its verses. Their clear, unmarked minds and their powerful memory, their general ignorance about reading and writing, all these factors assisted them in acquiring and retaining their information regarding the Qur'an. This is the reason why the message of the Qur'an, which was so congenial to their sensibilities and their natural propensities, got effectively imprinted on their hearts like inscription on stone. Since they believed it to be the Word of God, it was sacred to them also. They couldn't permit themselves that a single word or even a letter of it be altered or replaced in its text. They tried

to acquire the nearness to God by reciting its verses. It should be noted here that from the very early days the Prophet (S) had engaged a group of scribes for the purpose of writing down the Qur'an, who were known as the "Scribes of the Revelation." This should be regarded as one of the merits in favour of the Qur'an from which all other ancient books are excluded. The absence of any alteration and change in the Word of God was on account of this process of writing and recording from the very beginning.

The other reason responsible for the popularity of the Qur'an among the people was its extraordinary, supernatural literary and artistic dimension depicted in its rhetoric and eloquence. It was this strong literary attraction towards the Qur'an, which had an appeal for the people, that prompted them to immediately memorize its verses. But unlike other literary works like the Diwan-e-Hafiz and poems of Rumi, which are exposed to meddling by admirers who think they are improving on the original, nobody could ever give himself the permission of meddling with the sacred text; for the Qur'an immediately declared in one of its verses:

> Had he [the Prophet (S)] invented against Us any sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand, then We would surely have cut his life vein. (69:44-46)

There are several other verses in the Qur'an that forbid forgery in relation to the Word of God. The gravity of this sin as stressed by the Qur'an had profound impression upon minds and served as a severe discouragement in this regard. In this way, before any type of alterations could have taken place in its verses, they were repeated often, thus reaching a stage that it was impossible to increase, diminish or alter even a single word in this heavenly book. Accordingly, there is neither any need of any discussion about the Qur'an from the point of view of authenticity, nor does any scholar of the Qur'an throughout the world see any necessity of such a discussion. However, I think, it is necessary to remind the readers about the fact that, because of the rapid expansion of the Islamic domain and distance of the major part of the population living far away from Medina, which was the center of huffaz (those who memorized) of the Qur'an and the Companions of the Prophet, there arose the danger of occurrence of advertent or wilful gradual alteration in the Qur'anic text. But the prompt dexterity and timely awareness on the part of early Muslims averted this danger. Within the first five decades, they utilized the services of the Sahabah (the Companions of the Prophet) and those of the huffaz of the Qur'an for the purpose of averting the chances of conscious or inadvertent alterations in the text of the Qur'an. They distributed approved copies of the Qur'an from Medina to the surrounding regions. They thus checked any chances of wrongdoing, especially on the part of the Jews, who are well-known champions in this field.

2. Analytical Study:

During this stage of study and analysis of a book, it is essential to understand these things: the

subject it deals with, the goal that it pursues, its outlook regarding the world, its point of view concerning man and society, its style and treatment of the subject-whether the treatment of the subject is in an intellectual and scholarly manner, or whether it has its own characteristic style. One more question that is relevant in this context is whether this book contains any message and guidance for humanity or not. If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then what is the message that it conveys? The first group of questions are, of course, concerned with the point of view and outlook of the book regarding man and universe, about life and death etc. In other words, these questions are associated with the, world-outlook of the book, and in terms of Islamic philosophy, with its al-hikmat al-nazariyyah (theoretical wisdom). But the second group of questions is concerned with the perspective of future of mankind offered by the book. They deal with the suggested basis for moulding the human kind and human societies. This aspect may be regarded as the "message" of the book.

This sort of understanding is, however, concerned with the subject of the book, and is relevant in regard to all kinds of books, whether it is the medical treatise of Ibn Sina, or if it is the Gulistan of Sa'di. It is possible that a book may lack an outlook as well as a message, or it may contain an outlook but not a message, or it may contain both.

Regarding the analytical study of the Qur'an we shall have to see, in general, what sort of problems does the Qur'an deal with, and what is its manner of presenting them. What is its manner of argument and its approach to various problems? Does the Qur'an, being the defender, presenter and protector of faith, and its message being a religious message, view reason as a rival to its teachings, and clings to a defensive posture against it, or whether it considers reason as a supporter and protector of faith and relies upon its power? These questions and various other queries, arise during the analytical study of the Qur'an.

3. Study of the Sources of Ideas:

At this stage, i.e. after verification of authenticity of the authorship of a book, and after thorough study and analysis of its contents, we come to the stage of exploring whether the contents of the book comprise of its author's own original ideas, or, the ideas have been borrowed from some other source. For instance, in studying Hafiz's works, after verifying the authenticity of the verses and making their analytical study, we have to see whether these themes, ideas and thoughts that have been incorporated into Hafiz's poetry and poured into the moulds of his words, phrases, couplets, language and style, are actually the creations of Hafiz, or whether only the words and phrases and the beauty, art and craftsmanship reflected in the verses come from Hafiz, whereas the thoughts and ideas belong to someone else, or have been borrowed from another source. After ascertaining his artistic originality, the intellectual originality of Hafiz's works has also to be established.

This kind of study regarding Hafiz, or any other author, implies the study of the source and roots of the author's ideas and thought. This sort of study is secondary to an analytical study;

that is, firstly the contents of the author's thought should be completely understood, and afterwards an attempt should be made to identify its roots and sources. Otherwise, the result of one's effort will be something like the works of certain writers of history of various sciences, who write without any thorough knowledge of the subject, or similar to the works of those writers of philosophical books, who undertake, for instance, a comparative study of Ibn Sina and Aristotle, without any knowledge of either. After superficial comparison and on discovering some literal similitudes between the works of the two great thinkers, they immediately sit down to pass a quick judgment. Although, for the purpose of a comparative study, very deep and profound knowledge of the ideas and thoughts of both of the philosophers is required. A lifetime of study is necessary for such a task; otherwise, it has no more value than can be given to blind imitative conjectures.

For the study and understanding of the Qur'an, an analytical study must be followed by a comparative and historical study. That is, the contents of the Qur'an should be compared with other books that existed at that time, specially the religious ones. For the purpose of such a comparison, it is essential to keep in mind the conditions and relations of the Arabian peninsula with other parts of the world, and the number of educated Arabs living in Mecca at the time. Only then we can arrive at an estimation of the influence of other books of those times on the contents of the Qur'an, and if we find something common in them, discover its proportions. We can then see whether the material that has been borrowed from other books is used in an original manner or not. Does the Qur'an go even further to the extent of playing a role in amending the contents of those books and setting right the errors occurring in them?

The Three Distinguishing Characteristics of the Qur'an

Our study of the Qur'an acquaints us with three distinguishing characteristics of this holy book. The first distinguishing characteristic is the absolute authenticity of its source. That is, without the slightest need of any comparison between the oldest manuscripts, it is evident that what we recite as the verses of the Holy Qur'an, are exactly the same words presented before the world by Muhammad ibn 'Abd-Allah (S). The second characteristic feature of the Qur'an is the quality of its contents: its teachings are genuinely original and have not been adopted or plagiarized. It is the duty of an analytical study to prove this fact. The third characteristic of the Qur'an is its Divine identity: its teachings have been delivered to the Prophet from a world that transcends his thought and mind. The Prophet (S) was only a recipient of this revelation and message. This is the result that we obtain from the study of the sources and roots of the Qur'an.

But the study of the sources of the Qur'an, and confirmation of its originality, depend upon the analytical study. So I resolve to open this discussion with the analytical study of the Qur'an. We shall first see what is the subject matter of the Qur'an, what kind of problems are discussed in it, what type of problems have been given priority, and in what manner those

subjects are presented in it. If we are successful in our critical analysis, and acquire a sufficient understanding of the Qur'anic teachings, it will bring us to an acknowledgment of its principal aspect, which is the Divine aspect of the Qur'an, the quality of its being a Divine miracle.

Conditions Necessary for the Study of the Qur'an

The understanding of the Qur'an requires certain preliminaries which are briefly described here. The first essential condition necessary for the study of the Qur'an, is the knowledge of the Arabic language, such as for the understanding of Hafiz and Sa'di, it is impossible to get anywhere without the knowledge of the Persian language. In the same way, to acquaint oneself with the Qur'an without knowing the Arabic language is impossible. The other essential condition is the knowledge of the history of Islam; since, unlike the Bible and the Torah, this book was revealed gradually during a long period of twenty-three years of the Prophet's life, a tumultuous time in the history of Islam. It is on this account that every verse of the Qur'an is related to certain specific historical incident called sha'n-i nuzul The sha'n-i nuzul, by itself does not restrict the meaning of the verses, but the knowledge of the particulars of revelation throws more light on the subject of the verses in an effective way.

The third condition essential for the understanding of the Qur'an, is the correct knowledge of the sayings of the Prophet (S). He was, according to the Qur'an itself, the interpreter of the Qur'an par excellence. The Qur'an says:

> We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them ... (16:44)

The Qur'an also says:

> It is He who has sent among the illiterate a Messenger from among them, to recite His sings to them, and to purify them and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom. (62:2)

According to the Qur'an, the Prophet (S) himself is the exegetist and the interpreter of the Qur'anic text. Whatever has reached us from the Prophet, is of great help in our understanding of the Qur'an. For the Shi'ah, who believe in the infallible Imams (A) also, and believe that the Prophet (S) has transmitted everything he obtained from God to his spiritual successors (awliya'), those genuine riwayat (narrations about the Prophet (S)) that have reached us through the Imams, possess the same degree of authenticity as those obtained directly from the Prophet (S). Accordingly, the authentic riwayat of the Imams are of great help to us in our understanding of the Qur'an.

A very important point to remember during the initial stages of study, is that we should try to

understand the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself; because, the verses of the Qur'an constitute a completely united integral whole, a coherent unified structure. If we single out any verse from the Qur'an and try to understand it in isolation from the rest of the Book, it would not be a correct method. However, it is possible that we may happen to understand it, but the method is not recommended by caution, as certain verses of the Qur'an are explanatory for certain other verses. All great commentators of the Qur'an have affirmed this method; the infallible Imams also had approved of this manner of interpretation of the Qur'anic verses. The Qur'an has its own specific mode of discussing various problems. There are instances where if a solitary verse is studied without placing it in its proper context, it gives quite a different sense than when it is seen under the light of the verses dealing with a similar subject.

For instance, the specific mode and style of the Qur'an may be noticed from the distinction drawn between al-ayat al-muhkamat (the firm verses) and al-ayat al-mutashabihat (the ambiguous verses). There is a prevalent view regarding the muhkamat and the mutashabihat. Some people imagine that al-ayat al-muhkamat are such verses as whose meaning is quite simple and clear, whereas the meaning of al-ayat al-mutashabihat is cryptic, enigmatic and puzzling. According to this notion, men are only permitted to cogitate upon the meaning of al-ayat al-muhkamat, and al-ayat al-mutashabihat are basically inscrutable and beyond their understanding. Here, the question arises, what is the philosophy underlying al-ayat al-mutashabihat? Why has the Qur'an put forward such verses that are incomprehensible? A brief answer to this question is that neither muhkam means "simple" and "clear", nor mutashabih means "ambiguous", "cryptic" and "enigmatic." "Ambiguous" and "enigmatic" are adjectives applicable to sentences that do not convey the meaning in a direct and simple manner, as are sometimes met in the writings of various authors. For example, when Sultan Mahmud rewarded the poetic efforts of Ferdowsi with a reward of an insignificant and humiliating amount of money, Ferdowsi did not accept it, and instead he accused Sultan Mahmud of the trait of parsimony in his versified lampoons. Some of them were quite clear and obvious whereas the others were not devoid of ambiguity and a lot of enigma. Ferdowsi is quite direct when he says:

> Had the king's mother been an honourable lady,
> He would have rewarded me with knee-high gold and silver.

However, when he remarks:

> The palm of king Mahmud, the conqueror of lands,
> Was nine times nine and three times four,

what does he intend to say? Here Ferdowsi has made use of an enigmatic technique. Those who are interested would like to know the solution: 9 X 9=81, 3 X 4=12, and 81 plus 12 add up to 93. Ferdowsi says, the Sultan's palm was just like 93. It means that the fist of the Sultan

was so tightly closed that only his thumb was free, and this thumb along with the index finger (which acquires the shape of 92 and other three fingers make 93. Through this obscure statement Ferdowsi wants to emphatically report the miserliness of the Sultan.

We shall see whether there are actually any enigmatic and abstruse verses in the Qur'an. Such an assumption contradicts with the text of the Qur'an which unequivocally states that it is a clear and comprehensible book whose verses provide guidance and shed light. The core of the problem is that some of the issues dealt with in the Qur'an are related to metaphysical matters and the transcendental world, which cannot be expressed in ordinary language. In the words of Shaykh Shabistari:

> The word fails to encompass meaning,
> The ocean cannot be poured into a pot.

Since the language of the Qur'an is the same as used by men, inevitably, the same diction is used for the most sublime and spiritual themes as we human beings use for earthly subjects. But in order to prevent any misunderstanding about certain problems, some verses have been devised in such a way that they need to be explained with the help of other verses. There is no way except this. For example, the Qur'an wanted to point out to a truth namely, seeing God through the heart; that is, to witness the presence of God by means of one's heart. This idea has been expressed in the following terms:

> (Some) faces on the Day shall be bright, looking towards their Lord. (75:22-23)

Uniqueness of the Qur'an

The Qur'an makes use of the verb "looking," and no other word more suitable could be available for the expression of the desired sense. But to avert the possibility of any doubt, the Qur'an explains in other place:

> Vision perceives Him not, and He perceives all vision. (6:104)

The second verse makes the reader distinguish between two different meanings conveyed by the same word. In order to avoid any possibility of ambiguity in its exalted themes, the Qur'an asks us to check the mutashabihat against the mahkamat:

> He sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses firm (ayat mahkamat)
> that are the essence of the Book. (3:6)

Thereby, the Qur'an means that there are certain verses whose firmness cannot be denied and other meanings cannot be derived from them, except their real ones. Such verses are the 'mother' of the Book (umm al-kitab). In the same way as a mother is the refuge to her child, or

a cosmopolitan city (umm al-qura) is the center of small cities, al-ayat al-muhkamat are also regarded as the axes of the mutashabihat. Al-ayat al-mutashabihat are, of course, to be cogitated upon and understood, but they are to be pondered upon with the help of al-ayat al-muhkamat. Any inference drawn without the help of the mother-verses would not be correct and reliable.

Is the Qur'an Understandable?

During the analysis and study of the Qur'an, the first question that arises is whether the Qur'an can be studied and understood. Has this book been introduced for the purpose of studying and understanding it, or whether it is just for reading and reciting and obtaining reward and blessing? The reader, possibly, may wonder at raising of such a question. To him it may appear beyond doubt that the Qur'an is meant for the purpose of knowing and understanding it. Nevertheless, in view of various undesirable currents, which due to numerous reasons came into existence in the Muslim world regarding the question of understanding of the Qur'an, and which had an important role in bringing about the decline of Muslims, we shall discuss this matter in brief. Regrettably, the roots of those degenerate and dangerous notions still persist in our societies. So I consider it necessary to elaborate on this topic.

Among the Shi'ah scholars of three or four centuries ago, there appeared a group which believed that the Qur'an is not a hujjah ("proof", meaning a legal source usable for vindication). Among the four sources of fiqh that have been regarded as the criteria and standard for the understanding of the Islamic problems by Muslim scholars, i.e. the Qur'an, the sunnah (tradition), 'aql (reason) and ijma' (consensus of opinion), they did not recognize three of them. Regarding ijma', they said that it belongs to the Sunni tradition and they could not follow it. Concerning reason, they maintained that reason can also err, and reliance on reason is not legitimate. About the Qur'an they respectfully asserted that the Qur'an is greater in station than being subject to study and comprehension by us humble human creatures. It is only the privilege of the Prophet and the Imams to ponder over the verses of the Holy Qur'an. We ordinary human beings have only the right to read and recite them. This group was that of the Akhbariyun or Akhbaris.

The Akhbaris regarded hadith and chronicles as the only permissible sources of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). One may be astounded to learn that in some of the Qur'anic exegeses written by these people, they mentioned only those verses about which the tradition existed, and refrained from mentioning other verses as if they are not a part of the Qur'an.

Such a kind of practice was an injustice to the Qur'an. This shows that a society that could neglect and alienate their own heavenly book and that too of the standard and stature of the Qur'an, is not at all up to the Qur'anic standards. Besides the Akhbaris there were other groups who also regarded the Qur'an as inaccessible to the ordinary human intellect. Among them the Ash'arites can be named, who believed that the knowledge of the Qur'an does not necessarily

mean that its verses should be pondered over, but the real meanings are the same as that the words literally communicate. According to them, whatever we understand from the outward meaning, we have to be satisfied with it. We should not be concerned with the secret and inner meanings. It was quite natural that this sort of thinking regarding the Qur'an, very rapidly, gave rise to serious deviations and grave misunderstandings. Since they were forced on the one hand to the task of interpretation of the meaning of the Qur'anic verses, and, on the other hand, banished reason also from the realm of religious learning, as a result, they were forced to adopt merely vulgar and superficial interpretations of the Qur'anic verses. On account of their faulty way of thinking, they deviated from the regular course of correct thinking, and thus gave way to distorted and faulty religious vision. As the result of this type of religious thinking, heretical beliefs like the personification of God the Almighty, and numerous other distorted ideas like the possibility of visual perception of God, His possession of physical characteristics etc., came into existence.

Opposing the group which abandoned the Qur'an, another group came into existence which used the Qur'an as the means to fulfill their selfish aims. They gave the Qur'anic verses such interpretations as were favourable to their selfish interests, and wrongfully attributed certain ideas to the Qur'anic text that were not at all in agreement with the spirit of the Qur'an. In answer to every objection that was made against them, they said that none except themselves could understand the esoteric and secret meaning of the Qur'anic verses, and whatever they stated was based on the understanding and knowledge of the esoteric meaning of the verses.

The champions of this movement in the history of Islam consist of two groups: the first group are the Isma'ilis, who are also known as the Batinis (secret sect), and the other are the Sufis. Most of the Isma'ilis are found in India and some of them are in Iran. They had formed an empire in Egypt known as the Fatimid caliphate. The Isma'ilis are so-called Shi'ahs who believe in six Imams. But all the Twelver Imami Shi'ah scholars are unanimous in the opinion that in spite of their belief in six Imams, the Isma'ilis stand at a greater distance from the Shi'ite faith than the non-Shi'ite sects. The Sunnis, who do not believe in any of the Imams in the same sense as the Shi'ah do, nevertheless are nearer to the Shi'ah than these "Six-Imami Shi'ahs." The Isma'ilis, on account of their batini beliefs and secretive practices have played a treacherous role in the history of Islam and have had a big hand in causing serious deviations in the realm of Islam.

Besides the Isma'ilis, the Sufis are also charged with distortion of the Qur'anic verses and had a long hand in interpreting them according to their personal beliefs. Here I present a specimen of their exegesis so that the extent and method of their misinterpretation may be known:

The anecdote of Ibrahim (A) and his son Isma'il is described by the Qur'an as follows: It occurred to Ibrahim (A) in his dream that he has to sacrifice his son for the sake of God. At first he is perplexed regarding such an instruction; but as he repeatedly has the dream reiterating the same theme, he becomes certain of the Will of God and decides to obey the Divine command. He puts the whole matter before his son, who also faithfully accepts his

father's proposal of executing the Divine command:

> "My son, I see in a dream that I shall sacrifice thee; consider what thinkest thou?" He said, "My father, do as thou art bidden; thou shalt find me, God willing, one of the steadfast." (37:102)

Here the aim is the expression of total submission and resignation towards the Divine decree. For the same reason the father and son are ready to execute the Divine command with whole-hearted purity and sincerity, but the execution of the command was stopped by the Will of God. But the same incident is interpreted by the Sufis in this fashion: Ibrahim here represents intellect and reason ('aql) and Isma'il represents the self (nafs); the Qur'anic anecdote is an allegory that hints at the attempt of reason to murder the human self (nafs).

It is obvious that such interpretation of the Qur'an is like wanton treatment of it, and presents a distorted perspective of its teachings. It is in the context of such deviate interpretations of the Qur'an based upon personal or sectarian bias and interests that the Prophet has said: One who interprets the Qur'an according to his wish, should be certain of his place in hell.

This kind of frivolous attitude towards the verses of the Qur'an amounts to the betrayal of the Qur'an and that too of a grievous degree. The Qur'an itself strikes a middle course between the stagnant and narrow-minded attitude of the Akhbaris and the unwarranted and deviate interpretations of the Batinis. It recommends a course of sincere, disinterested study and asks for unbiased and unprejudiced meditation over its meanings. Not only the believers and the faithful, but even the infidels are invited by it to contemplate over its verses. The Qur'an demands that it verses should be first contemplated over, before forming any adverse opinion against them. Addressing the opponents, it says, why they don't ponder over the Qur'an, what sort of hearts they possess, they are as if shut close and sealed:

> What, do they not ponder the Qur'an? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts? (47:24)

The Qur'an also says in one of its verses:

> (This is) a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good, that they may ponder the verses.

That is, We have not sent the Qur'an to be kissed, embraced and put on the niche to gather dust, but for men to read and to contemplate about its contents:

> That those endowed with understanding may ponder its signs and so remember. (38:29)

The above verse and scores of other such verses emphasize the importance of contemplation in the Qur'an and interpretation of the Qur'anic verses, although not an interpretation based on personal caprices and bias, but a just, truthful and balanced interpretation free of all traces of selfish interests. If we try to comprehend the Qur'an in an honest and unbiased way, it is not at all necessary to solve all problems that we find in it. In this regard the Qur'an is similar to Nature. In Nature, too, a number of mysteries have neither been solved yet, nor can they be solved in present conditions, yet are likely to be solved in the future. Moreover, in studying and understanding nature, man has to tailor his ideas in accordance with Nature itself. He is forced to interpret Nature in accordance with its reality. He cannot define Nature in terms of his own caprices and inclinations. The Qur'an, like the book of Nature, is a book that has not been sent for a specific age and time. Had it been otherwise, all the secrets of the Qur'an would have been discovered in the past; this heavenly Book would not have presented its charm, freshness and vitality. But we see that the possibility of contemplation, reflection and discovery of new dimensions is inexhaustible in the case of this Holy Book. This is a point that has amply been emphasized and clarified by the Prophet and the Imams. In a tradition, it is related from the Prophet (S) that the Qur'an, like the sun and the moon, will present its movement and continuity; that is, the Qur'an is not static or monotonous. In some other place the Prophet has said that outwardly the Qur'an is beautiful and inwardly it is deep and unfathomable. In 'Uyun akhbar al-Rida, from the Imam al-Rida (A), it is quoted that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A) was asked about the secret of it that as the time passes and the more it is read and recited, the Qur'an increases in its novelty and freshness day by day. The Imam al-Sadiq (A) answered:

> Because the Qur'an is not for an exclusive age or for an exclusive people.

The Qur'an has been sent for all ages and for all human beings. It is so composed that in spite of changes in knowledge, outlook and approach through various times and ages, it surpasses all learning and knowledge in all ages. While it encompasses mysteries and abstruse intricacies for the reader of every age, at the same time it presents a great feast of meanings and ideas that can satiate the needs of every time in accordance with the capacity of that particular age.

Issues in an Analytical Study of the Qur'an:

Now we shall proceed to study the contents of the Qur'an from an analytic viewpoint. Of course, if we were to deal with every subject of the Qur'an separately, it would call for --as Rumi would say-- seventy tons of paper. So we will confine our discussion mainly to general and then a few particular issues.

The Qur'an has dealt with a vast range of subjects, and in this process, it is more concerned with certain subjects and less with others. The universe and its Creator are among the most recurring themes of the Qur'an. We must try to see how it treats this theme. Is its outlook

philosophical or gnostic? Is its treatment similar to that of other religious books like the Bible and the Torah? Is it similar to that of the religious books of Hinduism? Does it deal with this problem in its own independent manner?

The other problem that is repeatedly treated by the Qur'an is the problem of the universe or the world of creation. We must examine the outlook of the Qur'an about the universe. Does it regard the universe and all creation to be an exercise in vanity and futility or does it regard it as being based on coherent truth? Does it consider the state of affairs in the universe as being based upon a series of laws and principles, or does it regard it as a chaotic phenomenon in which nothing is the cause or condition of any other thing? Among the general issues dealt by the Qur'an is the problem of the human being. The Qur'anic outlook regarding the human being must be analyzed. Does the Qur'an possess an optimistic outlook of man? Does it speak of him in pessimistic and negative terms? Does the Qur'an consider man as a despicable creature, or does it acknowledge his nobility and dignity?

The other problem dealt with in the Qur'an is the problem of human society. We have to see if the Qur'an considers the society to be primary and the individual as secondary or whether it subordinates the society to the individual. Are societies, according to the Qur'an, subject to laws governing their life and death, their rise and decline, or are these conditions applicable to individuals alone? In the same way, its conception of history also needs to be clarified. What is the Qur'anic view regarding history? What are the forces that control the dynamics of history? To what extent can an individual's influence affect the course of history in the view of the Qur'an?

The Qur'an deals with numerous other issues. I shall enumerate some of them here. One of them is the point of view of the Qur'an about itself. The other issue is related to the Prophet (S) and its manner of introducing and addressing him. Another issue is its definition of a believer (mu'min) and his characteristics and so on.

Furthermore, each of these general issues possesses various branches and divisions. For example, when discussing mankind and its situation, it is natural to speak about morality. Or, when speaking about society, the problem of human relationships also unavoidably enters the discussion. The same is true of such notions as "enjoining good and forbidding evil," and the problem of social classes.

How does the Qur'an Introduce Itself?

For the purpose of analysing Qur'anic themes, it is better to start by examining the opinion of the Qur'an about itself and its manner of self-introduction. The first and foremost thing that the Qur'an pronounces about itself is that all of its words, phrases and sentences are the Word of God. It makes clear that the Prophet (S) was not its author; rather the Prophet only related whatever was revealed to him through the agency of the Ruh al-Qudus (Gabriel) with the

permission of God.

The Qur'an describes its other function as the presentation of the Prophetic mission, which is aimed at guidance of humanity, by delivering it from darkness and leading it towards light:

> A Book We have sent down to thee that thou mayest bring forth mankind from the darkness into the light... (14:1)

Without doubt the darkness of ignorance is one of the vices from which the Qur'an emancipates humanity and leads it towards the light of knowledge and wisdom. However, if merely ignorance were regarded as darkness, then the philosophers could have accomplished this job. But there exist other evils more dangerous than the vice of ignorance, and to subdue them is beyond the power of sheer knowledge. Among them are the vices of worship of material benefits, egoism, enslavement to desires, and greed, which are considered to be personal and moral vices. Social vices like oppression and discrimination manifest the spiritual darkness of a society. In Arabic, the word zulm (injustice and oppression) is derived from the same root as zulmah (darkness), which shows that injustice is a form of social and spiritual darkness. To struggle against such forms of darkness is the responsibility and mission of the Qur'an and other heavenly books. Addressing Prophet Moses (A), the Qur'an says:

> That thou mayest bring forth your people from the darkness into the light ... (14:5)

This darkness, this shadow, is the darkness of Pharaoh's oppression and injustice and that of his clique. The light is the light of justice and freedom.

The exegetists of the Qur'an emphasize the point that whenever the Qur'an mentions darkness, it always uses it in the plural form although it always uses light in its singular form. This means that the word, (darkness) includes all sorts of darkness, all of the evil ways that lead towards darkness, and that (light) signifies one single right path --the path of righteousness, whereas the ways of deviation and perversion are many. In Suurat al-Baqarah, the Qur'an says:

> God is the Protector of the believers; He brings them forth from the darkness into the light. And the unbelievers --their protectors are taghut, that bring them forth from the light into the darkness ... (2:257)

The Qur'an determines its goal to be the breaking of the chains of ignorance, misguidance, moral and social corruption and destruction, or in other words, to dissipate all sorts of (darkness) and to guide humanity in the direction of justice, goodness and light.

The Language of the Qur'an

The other issue is that of gaining familiarity with the language of the Qur'an and the recitation of it. There are some people who think that the Qur'an is to be read merely for the purpose of obtaining spiritual reward (thawab) without need of understanding anything of its contents. They continuously recite the Qur'an, but if they are even once asked) "Do you understand the meaning of what you are reading?" they cannot answer. To recite the Qur'an is essential and good, being regarded as the first step necessary for comprehending its contents; and not merely as a means for gaining Divine reward.

The comprehension of the meaning of the Qur'an has certain peculiarities to which due attention must be paid. While other books are read for the purpose of acquiring the knowledge of novel ideas that merely involve reason and the rational faculties of the reader's mind, the Qur'an must be studied with the intention of educating oneself. The Qur'an itself clarifies this point:

> A book We have sent down to thee, blessed, that men possessed of mind may ponder its signs end so remember. (38:29)

One of the functions of the Qur'an is to instruct and to teach. For this purpose, the Qur'an addresses human reason and speaks in logical and demonstrative terms. There is also another language that the Qur'an makes use of. But this language is not used to appeal to the faculty of reason, but to the heart. This is the language of feeling. Whosoever wants to acquaint himself with the Qur'an, should be familiar with both of the languages and be able to make use of both of them simultaneously. It is a grave mistake to separate one from the other.

That which is termed here as the heart, is the great source of profound feeling that resides within all human beings. This is sometimes also called "the sense of being", i.e. the feeling of relationship between human existence and the Absolute Being.

One who knows the language of the heart, when he addresses the human being in this language, can move the inner depths of his being. It is not merely the mind and the intellect alone which is affected, but his whole being, which is profoundly influenced. This sort of influence can perhaps be illustrated by the example of music. The various forms of music share the common quality which is stimulation of human feelings. Music appeals to the human soul and immerses it into a specific world of feeling. The nature of feelings, excited by different kinds of music, of course, varies. Certain types of music may be associated with the passions of valour and bravery. In the past, on the battlefield, the effects of martial music were evident. Sometimes its effects were so strong that the frightened soldiers who would not dare come out of their bunkers, were made to march in fervour despite fierce attacks from enemy's ranks. It is possible that certain other kinds of music may excite sensual feelings and invite the listener to succumb to sensual vices. The results of such music are noticeable in the

moral waywardness of our own times. Perhaps no other thing could have so effectively broken down the walls of morality and chastity to the extent of this kind of music. Other kinds of instinctive feelings and passions, whether aroused by means of music or by some other means, can be controlled when addressed in the language that appeals to them.

One of the most sublime instincts and emotions present in all human beings is the urge for religion and the natural quest for God. It is in the same heavenly echoes that the Qur'an speaks to the Divine instincts of mankind. The Qur'an itself recommends that its verses be recited in fine and beautiful rhythms; for it is in those heavenly rhythms that it speaks to the Divine nature of man. The Qur'an, describing itself, maintains that it speaks in two languages. Sometimes it introduces itself as the Book of meditation, logic and demonstration; at other times as the Book of feeling and love. In other words, it does not merely seek to nourish the intellect and thought, but also nurtures the human soul.

The Qur'an lays great emphasis on its own specific quality of music, a music which more than any other music, is effective in arousing the profound and sublime feelings of the human heart. The Qur'an directs the believers to devote a few hours of the night to reciting its verses, and to recite them during their ritual prayers when their attention is turned towards God. Addressing the Prophet, the Qur'an says:

> O thou enwrapped in thy robes, keep vigil the night, except a little (a half of it, or diminish a little, or add a little) and chant the Qur'an very distinctly. (73:1 - 4)

It asks the Prophet (S) to recite the Qur'an while standing for the prayers. Tartiil means to recite neither too hastily that words cannot be distinguished, nor too slowly that their connection be lost. It commands the Prophet (S) to recite its verses rhythmically, and at the same time to cogitate upon their meaning. Again, in a later verse of the same surah, the Prophet is reminded that he needs enough sleep to effectively perform the daily chores of business or jihad in the path of God; nevertheless, he should not forget to seclude himself for worship.

It were the same rhythms of the Qur'an that became the singular source of spiritual joy and strength, and the means of producing inner purity and sincerity among Muslims. It was the same music of the Qur'an which, in a very short period of time, converted the barbarous tribes of the Arabian peninsula, into a steadfast nation of committed believers, who could grapple with the greatest powers of the age and overthrow them.

The Muslims did not merely view the Qur'an as a book of moral advice and instruction alone, but also, as a spiritual and ideological tonic. They recited the Qur'an with devotion of heart during their intimate nightly supplications, and during the day, they derived from it the strength to attack the unbelievers like roaring lions. The Qur'an had just such an expectation

of those who had found their faith. Addressing the Prophet, it says:

> Obey not the unbelievers, but struggle against them with it [the Qur'an] striving mightily. (25:52)

The Qur'an advises the Prophet (S) not to pay heed to the words of the infidels and to stand firmly against them equipped with the weapon of the Qur'an. It assures him that the ultimate victory shall be his. The life of the Prophet (S) itself is a positive proof of this assurance. He stood all alone against enemies without any support except the Qur'an, and the same Qur'an meant everything to him. It produced warriors for him, furnished arms and forces, until, ultimately, the enemies were totally subdued. The Qur'an drew towards him individuals from the enemy's camp, and caused them to submit before the Messenger of God. In this way the Divine pledge was fulfilled.

When the Qur'an calls its language "the language of the heart," it means the heart which it seeks to purify, enlighten and stimulate. This language is other than the language of music that occasionally arouses sensual feelings. It is also different from the language of martial music that arouses the spirit of heroism in the hearts of soldiers and strengthens and enhances their enthusiasm. Rather, it is the language which converted the Arab Bedouins into inspired mujahidin, for whom it was said:

> They carried their visions on their swords.

Those people carried their vision, their ideology, their religion and spiritual discoveries on their swords, and used them in the defence of those ideals and ideas. The notions of private and personal interest were alien to them. Though they were not innocent and infallible, and they did commit mistakes, yet they were those who rightly fitted the description:

> Standing in prayer during nights,
> fasting during daytime.

Every moment of day and night, they were in contact with the depths of Being. Their nights were passed in worship, and days in jihad.

It is on account of this characteristic, that the Qur'an is a book of the heart and the soul. Its appeal overwhelms the soul and brings tears flowing from the eyes and makes the heart tremble. It stresses this point and considers it true even of the "People of the Book":

> Those to whom We gave the Book before this believe in it, and, when it is recited to them, they say, 'We believe in it; surely it is the Truth from our Lord; even before it we were of those who surrender. (28:52-53)

It describes a group of people who undergo a state of veneration and awe when the Qur'an is recited before them. They affirm faith in all the contents of the Book, declare everything in it to be nothing but truth and their veneration of it continues to increase. In another verse, the Qur'an affirms that among the Ahl al-Kitab (The People of the Book), the Christians are closer to the Muslims than the idolaters and Jews. Then a group of Christians who believed and became Muslims on hearing the Qur'an are described in these words:

> And when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, thou seest their eyes overflow with tears, because of the truth they recognize. They say, "Our Lord we believe; so do Thou write us down among the witnesses." (5:83)

In another place, while describing the believers, the Qur'an says:

> God has sent down the fairest discourse as a book, consimilar in its oft repeated parts, whereat shiver the skins of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of God ... (39:23)

In these, as well as in many other verses (such as 19:58, 61:1, etc.), the Qur'an tells us that it is not merely a book of knowledge and analysis; but at the same time that it makes use of logical arguments that appeal to the intellect, it also speaks to the finer sensibilities of the human soul.

The Qur'an's Addressees:

Another point that has to be inferred from the Qur'anic text during its analytical study, is to determine the identity of those who are addressed by it. There are certain expressions like "guidance for the God fearing," "guidance and good tiding for the believers," "to admonish and caution him who is alive," which often recur in the Qur'an. Here the question may arise: Of what need is guidance for those who are already guided, the pious and the righteous? Moreover, we see that the Qur'an describes itself in these words:

> It is but a reminder unto all beings, and you shall surely know its tiding, after a while. (38:87-88)

Then, is this book meant for all the people of the world, or is it for the believers alone? In another verse addressing the Prophet, God the Most Exalted, says:

> We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings. (21:107)

A more detailed explanation of this matter would be undertaken during the course of later discussion regarding the historical aspect of the Qur'an. Here it is just sufficient to mention that the Qur'an is addressed to all the people of the world. It does not single out any particular

nation or group. Everyone who accepts the invitation of the Qur'an is assured of spiritual salvation. However, the verses which mention the Qur'an as the book of guidance for the believers and the God-fearing (mu'minun and muttaqun), clearly specify the kind of people who will be attracted towards it and others who will turn away from it. The Qur'an never names any particular nation or tribe as being its devotees. It does not take sides with a specially chosen people. Unlike other religions, the Qur'an never associates itself with the interests of any specific class. It does not say, for example, that it has come to safeguard the interests of the workers or the peasants. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes the point that its purpose is to establish justice. Speaking about the prophets, it says:

> And We sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that men might uphold justice ... (57:25)

The Qur'an advocates justice for all mankind, not merely for this or that class, tribe or nation. It does not, for example, like Nazism and other such cults, stir up the passions of prejudice to attract people. Similarly, it does not, like certain schools of thought like Marxism, base its appeal upon the human weakness of interest-seeking and enslave-ment to material motivations to incite people; because the Qur'an believes in the essential primariness of the rational consciousness of man and his intrinsic conscience. It believes that it is on the basis of its moral potentialities and its truth-conscious human nature that mankind is placed firmly on the path of progress and evolution. This is the reason why its message is not limited to the working or farming class or exclusively to the oppressed and deprived. The Qur'an addresses both the oppressors as well as the oppressed, and calls them to follow the right path. Prophet Moses (A) delivers the message of God to both Bani Israel and Pharaoh, and asks them to believe in the Lord and to move in His path. Prophet Muhammad (S) extends his invitation both to the chieftains of Quraysh and to ordinary persons like Abu Dharr and 'Ammar. The Qur'an cites numerous examples of an individual's revolt against his own self and his voluntary return from the path of deviation to the straight one. But, at the same time, the Qur'an is aware of the point that the restoration and repentance of those immersed in a life of luxury and opulence is comparatively more difficult than that of those familiar with the hardships of life: the oppressed and the deprived, who are, as a matter of fact, naturally more inclined towards justice; whereas the rich and wealthy, at the very first step, have to forgo their personal and class interests and abandon their wishes and aspirations.

The Qur'an declares that its followers are those who have a clear and pure conscience. They are drawn to it solely by the love of justice and truth, which is ingrained in the nature of all human beings ---not under the urge for material interests and worldly desires and allurements.

Conception of Reason in the Qur'an

Heretofore we have discussed briefly the diction of the Qur'an, and said that, for the purpose

of communicating its message, the Qur'an makes use of two types of languages, namely, the language of rational argument and the language of feeling. Each of these languages has a specific appeal. The first type addresses and appeals to the intellect or reason, while the second one is meant to appeal to the heart. Now we shall examine the point of view of the Qur'an regarding reason ('aql).

It is to be seen whether or not the Qur'an acknowledges the "authority" (hajjah) of reason --as the scholars of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and usul put it. This means whether or not we should respect the judge-ments of reason and act according to them if they happen to be correct and rightly deduced by it. Moreover, if one acts according to the dictates of reason and occasionally falls into error, will God exonerate him for it, or whether He will punish him on account of that error? And, if one fails to act according to the ruling of reason, does he deserve punishment?

Evidence in Favour of the Authority of Reason

The issue of the authority of reason in Islam is certain. Since the earliest times until the present, none amongst the Islamic scholars --except for a very small number-- has ever negated the authority of reason; they have counted it as one of the four sources of Islamic fiqh.

1. The Qur'an's Emphasis on Rationalism

Since our discussion is about the Qur'an, I think it necessary to produce arguments concerning the authority of reason from the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an, in various ways, confirms the authority of reason. About sixty to seventy verses can be cited --and that, too, for just one of the various ways, as mentioned-- in which the Qur'an indicates that such and such a matter has been mentioned for reason to reflect on. In one instance, the Qur'an refers to this issue in a striking statement:

> Surely the worst of beasts in God's sight are those that are deaf and dumb and do not reason. (8:22)

Of course, it is obvious that the Qur'an does not mean the physically deaf and dumb, but those who do not want to listen to truth, or those who, when they hear, do not wish to admit it with their tongues. In the view of the Qur'an, the ears which are unable to listen to truth and which are only used for listening to absurd and nonsensical things, are deaf. The tongue which is merely used to utter nonsense, is dumb. The people who do not reason, are those who do not make use of their intellect and their faculty of thought. Such are not fit to be called human beings. The Qur'an includes them among the beasts. In another verse, while bringing up a subject related to Divine Unity (al-tawhid), the Qur'an refers to the issue of unity of Divine Acts, and says:

> It is not for any soul to believe, save by the leave of God... (10:100)

After stating this profound issue --a problem which is not easily comprehensible to every human mind-- the Qur'an continues the verse like this:

> And He lays abomination upon those who do not reason. (10:100)

In these two verses, which I quote here for the sake of example, the Qur'an, in the terms of logic, invites us to ratiocination. There are many other verses in the Qur'an which, on the basis of consequential signification, can be said to accept the authority of reason. In other words, the Qur'an makes statements which cannot be accepted without accepting the authority of reason. For instance, an opponent is asked to forward rational argument in favour of his position:

> Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. (2:111)

This can only be inferred to mean the Qur'an's ratification of the authority of reason. In another place it uses syllogistic argument to prove the existence of the Necessary Being (wajib al-wujud):

> Were there gods in them [earth and heaven] other than God, they would surely disintegrate ... (21:22)

In these verses the Qur'an has framed a conditional proposition, which exempts or excludes the antecedent premise for arriving at a conclusion which is consequent upon it. Thus the Qur'an aims at emphasizing the role of reason and refutes the view of some of the religions that faith is alien to, or, is incompatible with reason, and that to embrace faith one has to suspend his rational faculty and concentrate upon heart alone, so that it may absorb the Divine light and become illuminated by it. This view is totally negated and refuted by the Qur'an.

2. References to the Law of Causality

The other argument that supports the view that the Qur'an approves of the ultimate authority of reason, is that it defines various problems in terms of cause-and-effect relationship. The cause-and-effect relation-ship, or the law of causation, is the foundation of rational thinking. This law is honoured by the Qur'an and is also employed by it. The Qur'an speaks on behalf of God, the Almighty, the Creator of the system of cause and effect. Despite the fact that His Word transcends the limitations of causality, the Qur'an is not oblivious of pointing out to the system of causality operating in the universe; it views all phenomena and events as being subservient to this system. The following verse supports this view:

> God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves ... (13:11)

The Qur'an intends to say that, although all destinies depend on the Will of God, He never imposes upon human beings such fate as is outside and alien to their determination, will and action. The destinies of societies also change according to their intrinsic system of functioning. God does not extravagantly alter the destiny of a nation without any specific reason, unless they themselves bring about a major change in their system of social and moral values and their manner of performing their individual duties.

The Qur'an urges Muslims to study the conditions and circumstances of societies of the past and to take lesson from their history. It is evident that if the destinies of races and nations were random, or dependent upon accidents, or were prescribed from above, the advice to study and draw a lesson would not have any sense. By laying emphasis on it, the Qur'an intends to remind us that a uniform system of laws governs the destinies of all the nations of the world. It also reminds us that if the conditions of a society in which we live, are similar to the conditions prevalent in a society of the past, the same fate awaits us too. Elsewhere, the Qur'an says:

> How many a city We have destroyed in its evildoing, and now it is fallen down upon its turrets. How many a ruined well, a tall palace. What, have they not journeyed in the land so that they have hearts to understand with, or ear to hear with ... ? (22:45-46)

From this statement, we can infer that the affirmation of the law of causality and the approval of the cause-and-effect relationship, imply the acceptance of authority of reason.

3. Rational Basis of Divine Commands

Another argument which proves that the Qur'an believes in the ultimate authority of reason, is that the Qur'an always explains the rationale behind its commands, laws and precepts. The scholars of usul al-din (the principles of the Faith) maintain that the harms and benefits caused by human deeds are among the reasons behind laws and commands. For example, while at one place the Qur'an ordains the performance of prayers, in another place it explains the philosophy of prayer:

> Indeed prayer forbids indecency and dishonour ... (29:45)

It mentions the spiritual effects of prayer, and states how the prayer can edify man. It explains that it is on account of this exaltation that man can dissociate himself from indecencies. Elsewhere, after laying down rules for observing the fast, the Qur'an explains the rationale for its command:

> Prescribed for you is the Fast, even as it was prescribed for those that were before you --haply you will be God-fearing. (2:183)

Similarly, with respect to other commandments like those regarding zakat (alms) and jihad, the Qur'an clarifies their necessity for individual, as well as for society. In this way, the Qur'an, not withstanding the transcendental nature of Divine commandments, clarifies fully their worldly and terrestrial relevance, and asks men to cogitate upon their rationale until their meaning becomes explicit, so that it may not be imagined that these laws are based on a series of occult notions beyond the power of human comprehension.

4. Combating Deviations of Reason

Another evidence in favour of the Qur'an's affirmation of the authority of reason --which is more conclusive than that mentioned above-- is the battle it launched against all those agents which obstruct the proper functioning of reason. For clarification of this point, we are forced to mention certain things in the way of an introduction.

The human mind can, in many cases, fall into error. This fact is acknowledged by all of us. However, this danger is not limited to the intellect alone, but can equally befall the senses, and feelings as well. Just for the sense of vision, scores of visual errors and optical illusions have been pointed out. In the case of reason, too, there are times when people frame an argument and rationale and draw an inference on its basis, but later on they realize that the basis of their conclusion was erroneous. Here the question arises, whether the faculty of reason should be suspended on account of its occasional failures, or whether we should employ other means for discovering the errors of the intellect and seek to avoid such errors. In answering this question, the Sophists said that reason should not be relied upon, and that, basically, argumentation and reasoning is an absurd practice. Other philosophers have given a fitting reply to the Sophists, and said that though the senses can also err like reason, but no one has ever recommended their suspension. Since it was not possible to discard reason, the philosophers resolved to find ways of making reason secure from error. During their efforts in this regard, they discovered that all arguments consist of two parts, namely, matter and form. Like a building which has various ingredients in its construction, like, lime, cement, steel, etc. (matter), to acquire a specific structure (form). In order to attain the permanence and perfection of its construction, it is essential to procure proper material as well as to draw a perfect and faultless plan. For the correctness and accuracy of an argument, too, it is essential that its content and form be both free of error and defect. For judging the validity of the form of any argument, the Aristotelian or formal logic came into existence. The function of formal logic is to determine the accuracy or inaccuracy of the form of an argument, and help the mind to avoid errors in the process of reasoning.

But the major problem that remains is that solely formal logic is inadequate for this purpose, because it cannot alone guarantee the validity of an argument. It can give assurance about one

aspect alone. To obtain the perfection of the material aspect, the use of material logic is also essential, that is, we need certain criteria for controlling the quality of the rational material.

Thinkers like Bacon and Descartes strove hard to evolve some kind of material logic similar to the formal logic of Aristotle, which was devised for formal reasoning. They did obtain certain criteria in this regard, though they are not as universal as those of Aristotelian logic, but are, to a limited extent, helpful in preventing the mind from committing errors in reasoning. Some may be surprised to know that the Qur'an has presented such principles for the prevention of any lapses in the process of reasoning, which surpass in merit and precedence the efforts of philosophers like Descartes and others.

The Qur'anic Viewpoint Regarding the Sources of Error

Among various sources of error mentioned by the Qur'an, one is that of taking conjecture and hypothesis for certainty and conviction. If a person were to adhere to the principle of putting conviction only in certainties and of not confusing between conjectures and certainties, he would not fall into error. The Qur'an lays great emphasis on this problem, and has clearly stated in one place that one of the biggest errors of the human mind is pursuit of conjectures and hypotheses. In another verse, which is addressed to the Prophet (S), the Qur'an says:

> If thou obeyest the most part of those on earth, they will lead thee astray from the path of God: they follow only surmise, merely conjecturing. (6:116)

In another verse, the Qur'an says:

> And pursue not that thou has no knowledge of ... (17:36)

This is the word of caution to mankind extended by the Qur'an, for the first time in the history of human ideas, warning mankind against this kind of error.

The second source of error in the reasoning process, which is particularly relevant in social issues, is imitation. Most people are such that they accept whatever beliefs that are current in their society. They adopt certain beliefs merely for the reason that they were followed by their preceding generation. The Qur'an bids people to carefully scrutinize all ideas and judge them by the criteria of reason --neither to follow blindly the conventional beliefs and traditions of their ancestors, nor to reject them totally without any rational justification. It reminds us that there are many false doctrines that were introduced in the past, but were accepted by the people, and there are also certain truths that were presented in the distant past, but people resisted them on account of their ignorance. In accepting any ideas or principles, men are advised to make use of their intellects and rational faculties, and not to indulge in blind imitation. Very often, the Qur'an puts imitation of ancestors in direct opposition to reason and

intellect:

> And when it is said to them: 'Follow what God has sent down', they say, 'No; but we will follow such things as we found our fathers doing.' What? Even if their fathers had no understanding of anything, and if they were not guided ? (2:170)

The Qur'an constantly reiterates the view that the idea of antiquity of an idea is neither the evidence of its falsity, nor is it a testimony of its truthfulness. Antiquity affects material objects; but the eternal truths of existence never become old and outmoded. Truths like:

> God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves ... (13:11)

are true for ever and ever. The Qur'an asks us to face issues with the weapon of reason and intellect. One should neither forsake a belief for fear of becoming the target of others' ridicule and banter, nor should he accept a belief just because it is upheld by some important and well-known persons. We should ourselves study and investigate the roots of all matters and draw our own conclusions.

A Third effective source of error pointed out by the Qur'an is

> Selfish motives tarnish virtue and merit,
> A cascade of curtains gallops from the heart towards vision.

Unless one maintains objectivity and neutrality in every matter, he is unlikely to think correctly. Reason can function properly only in an atmosphere that is free of selfish desires and motives. A well-known anecdote of al-Allamah al-Hilli, can illustrate this point.

A problem of fiqh was put before al-Allamah al-Hilli: If an animal falls inside a well, and the carcass cannot be removed; what should be done with the well? Incidentally, during the same days, an animal happened to fall into the well in his own house, and it became inevitable for him to deduce an injunction to solve his own problem, too There were two possible ways to solve the issue: Firstly, the well should be totally closed, not to be used again; secondly, a fixed quantity of water should be emptied from the well and the rest of well's water would be clean and usable. The 'Allamah realized that he could not give a completely impartial verdict about the problem without interference from his own personal interest. Accordingly, he ordered his own well be closed. Then, with an easy mind, free of the pressure of selfish motives. he turned to deducing the details of verdict in the second case.

The Qur'an contains a large number of warnings regarding the evil of submission to personal desires. The following is just one instance of it:

They follow nothing except conjecture, and what the self desires ... (53:25)

Qur'anic Outlook Regarding the "Heart"

Perhaps I need not explain here that in the language of literature and mysticism the term heart does not mean the organ situated in the left side of the human body, which pumps blood into the blood vessels. What is implied is the sublime and distinguishing faculty of the human soul, as can be readily understood from the following examples from the Qur'an and verses of Sa'di:

Surely in that there is a reminder to him who has a heart ... (50:37)

My heart was alarmed
[on sensing the coming danger],
While I, a thoughtless dervish,
Do not know what
this wandering prey has come across.

These two examples make it obvious that the connoted meaning of the heart is quite different from the bodily organ. Elsewhere, the Qur'an refers to the ailments of the heart:

In their hearts is a sickness, and God has increased that sickness ... (2:10)

To cure this sickness is beyond the powers of any man of medicine, even the heart specialist; only the doctors of the spirit can diagnose such diseases and suggest proper remedies.

Definition of the Heart

What is the definition of this heart then? An answer to this question is to be sought in the reality of human existence. Every human being, although he is a single individual, possesses myriads of existential dimensions. The human "self" encompasses myriads of thoughts, desires, fears, hopes and inclinations. Like the ocean which links all rivers with one another, all these components of the human personality are related to the same center, which unites them with one another. The "self" itself is the deep and unfathomable ocean, whose depths no one can claim to have charted out and to have discovered all its mysteries. Philosophers mystics, and psychologists --each of them has tried in his own specific way to explore its depths, and has succeeded only to a certain degree in discovering its secrets. Perhaps the mystics, a bit more than others, have been successful in this regard. What the Qur'an refers to as the heart, is the reality of that ocean, which includes all that we name as the manifestations of the soul, to which all its rivers and tributaries are connected. Even reason is one of the

various rivers associated with this sea.

In places where the Qur'an speaks of revelation, it does not make any mention of reason; rather it is merely concerned with the heart of the Prophet (S). This does not mean an absence of rational and demonstrative reception of the Holy Qur'an on the part of the Prophet, but it was his heart which, in a state that we cannot imagine, obtained the direct experience and awareness of those transcendental realities. The verses of Suurat al-Najm and Suurat al-Takwir describe the state of this union to some extent:

> Nor speaks he out of caprice. This is naught but a revelation revealed taught him by one terrible in power, very strong; he stood poised, being on the higher horizon, then drew near and approached nearer, two bow's length away, or nearer, then revealed to His servant that He revealed. His heart lies not of what he saw. (53:3-11)

The Qur'an mentions all these things to show that these matters are basically beyond the range of rational understanding.

> Truly this is the word of a noble messenger having power, of honoured place with the Lord of the Throne, obeyed, moreover trusty. Your companion is not possessed; he truly saw him on the clear horizon; he is not niggardly of the Unseen. (81:19-23)

Muhammad Iqbal offers a fine interpretation of this subject. He says that the prophet is one who, at first, imbibes the entire truth, and later on, in order to enrich the world and to alter the course of history, communicates everything that has reached him by the way of Revelation.

Wherever the Qur'an speaks of the revelation and the heart, al- though its import transcends the limits of reason and thought, its speech is not irrational or anti-rational. It expounds a vision which surpasses human reason and sensibility, and enters a domain which is, basically, beyond reason and intellect.

Characteristics of the Heart

The Qur'an regards the heart, also, as an instrument of understanding. In fact, the greater part of the Qur'anic message is addressed to the human heart --a message which is audible to the ears of the heart alone, and is inscrutable to other receptive faculties. Accordingly, it attaches great importance to the care, protection, and development of this instrument. In the Qur'an, we recurrently come across such notions as purification of the self, purity and enlightenment of the heart, and purification of the heart:

> Prosperous is he who purifies it [the self]. (91:9)

> No indeed; but that they were earning has overwhelmed their hearts. (83:14)

And about the salvation and enlightening of the heart, the Qur'an says:

> If you fear God, He will assign you [the capacity of] distinguishing ...(8:29)
> But those who struggle in Our [cause], surely We shall guide them in Our ways... (29:69)

Contrarily, the Qur'an recurrently reminds that indecencies infect and darken the human soul, and deprive the human heart of sublime inclinations and virtuous tendencies. At one place, speaking on behalf of the believers, it says:

> Our Lord, make not our hearts to swerve after Thou hast guided us ... (3:8)

Describing the qualities of the evildoers, the Qur'an says:

> No indeed; but that they were earning has overwhelmed their hearts. (83:14)

The darkness of sin and injustice has engulfed their hearts:

> When they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve ... (61:5)

About the sealing and hardening of the hearts, it says:

> God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering ... (2:7)

And also:

> We lay veils upon their hearts lest they understand it ... (6:25) So does God seal the hearts of the unbelievers. (7:101) So that their hearts have become hard, and many of them are ungodly. (57:16)

All these verses point to the fact that the Qur'an recommends a sublime, spiritual atmosphere for mankind, and deems it necessary for every individual to strive to keep it clean and unpolluted. In addition, since an unsound social atmosphere renders fruitless the efforts of most individuals to keep pure and wholesome, the Qur'an recommends that the people should employ all their endeavour in the direction of purification of their social atmosphere. The Qur'an unequivocally propounds the view that the continued existence of all those sublime values, beliefs and ideas, and continued social receptivity to all its moral advice and counsels,

depend upon individual and collective struggle to eradicate all types of meanness, sensuality, and lewdness.

Human history itself is a witness to the fact that whenever despotic regimes have wanted to bring other societies under their autocratic rule, they have tried to corrupt their social spirit and pollute their social atmosphere. They provided enormous facilities for the people to indulge in licentiousness, and gave them every kind of freedom in this regard. A heart-rending account of this unholy treatment meted out to Muslims of Spain --a region which is regarded to have played an effective role in initiating the Renaissance, and had the most advanced culture in Europe-- throws enough light on this phenomenon. In order to divest Spain out of Muslims' hands, the Christians resorted to defilement of the morals of Muslim youth, by providing ample facilities for their debaucheries. They even went to the extent of alluring and enticing the army generals and government officials in topmost ranks. They thus succeeded in diverting Muslims from the path of determination and purpose, and in divesting them of their power, their strength of faith, and purity of soul, converting them into profligate weaklings addicted to drinking and licentiousness. It is obvious that it is not very difficult to subdue such individuals. Christians took revenge on nearly eight hundred years of Muslim rule in such a way that history is ashamed at recounting those deeds. The same Christians who, according to the teachings of Jesus Christ ("offer your left cheek if your right cheek is slapped"), were supposed to behave in a different way, surpassed the bloodthirsty tradition of Genghiz Khan by the massacre of Muslims in Spain. Nevertheless, the ruin that Muslims suffered was the result of their own spiritual degeneration and decay; it was their punishment for abandoning the Qur'anic commands.

In our times, also, wherever the evil of colonialism exists, the same practices are vigorously adopted --a danger against which the Qur'an so emphatically warns us. The colonialists try to corrupt the hearts; when the heart is thus debilitated, reason, too, is not only lost and fails to function properly, but is itself turned into a terrible bondage. The colonialists and the exploitive powers are not afraid of establishing schools and universities: they even advocate popular education; but, on the other hand, they take good care to make arrangements to corrupt and destroy the spirit of students, and of the teachers as well. They are fully aware of the fact that an unhealthy mind and a sickly soul cannot make any decisive move, and readily yield to every type of exploitation and degradation.

That is why the Qur'an gives ample importance to the idea of exaltation, edification, and purity of the soul of society. In one of its verses, it says:

> And help one another to piety and God-fearing, do not help each other to sin and enmity... (5:2)

Men are, firstly, enjoined to pursue piety and are warned against sinning; secondly, they are asked to perform righteous deeds collectively, not individually.

Here I shall mention two or three sayings of the Prophet (S) and the Imams (A) in order to elucidate this point. There is a tradition that once a person came in the presence of the Prophet (S) and told him that he wished to ask certain questions. The Prophet asked him whether he wanted to listen to the answers, or if he wished to ask questions first. He asked the Prophet (S) to give the answers. The Prophet (S) told him that his question was concerned with the meaning of virtue and goodness. The man affirmed that he intended to ask exactly the same question. The Prophet gently knocked the man's chest with his three fingers, saying: "Put this question to your own heart;" then he added: "This heart is so made that it is harmonious with virtue; it is put at ease by virtue and piety, but disturbed by vice and villainy. In the same way, as presence of an alien disharmonious object in the human body causes uneasiness and discomfort, and disturbs its order, the human soul is thrown off its balance and ease on account of faulty behaviour." What is commonly called the pain and torment of the conscience, is the same state of inconformity and alienation of the soul:

> [For an honest insight] ask your own heart, though the masters may have their own (different) opinion.

The Prophet (S) points out the fact that if a person endeavours to seek reality and truth with an open and impartial mind, his heart can never deceive him in this regard; it will always guide him towards the straight path. Basically, as long as man is in search of truth and reality, and treads the path of truth, whatever he encounters in this course is nothing but truth. This is, of course, a very delicate point which is often misunderstood. When someone falls into misguidance and loses his path, it is because he was following a certain direction which was not determined by sincere search of truth. Answering someone who had asked the Prophet, "What is virtue?," he said, "If you really want to know what is virtue, then understand that when your heart is serene and your conscience at rest, whatever has caused them to be such, is virtue. But when you are attracted towards something, and that does not bring peace and serenity to your heart, then you should know that it is vice and sin."

Elsewhere, when the Prophet (S) was asked about the meaning of faith (iman), he said, "When one performs an ugly deed, and is overwhelmed with the feeling of reproach and displeasure, and when one performs virtuous deeds and feels happy and joyous, it means that he is endowed with faith."

It has been quoted from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A) that when a believer liberates himself from all worldly bondages, he feels the delight of nearness to God within his heart; in this state, the whole world appears to him very small and insignificant; he strives with all power to liberate himself from the bondages of the material world. This is a reality attested by the lives of the men of God.

In the biographies of the Prophet (S), it is written that once after his morning prayers the Prophet (S) went to visit the Ashab al-Suffah. They were a group of poor men who did not

possess any worldly belongings, and used to live by the side of Prophet's Mosque in al-Madinah. When the Prophet (S) happened to see one of them, Harith ibn Zayd, who looked rather pale and emaciated, his eyes sunk deep inside his skull, he inquired, "How are you." He answered, "I have woken up a man of certain faith." The Prophet asked him what proved his claim. He answered, "I am bereft of sleep at nights and engage in fasting during the days." The Prophet told him that this was insufficient. "Tell me more about it," he said. Harith said, "O Messenger of God, my condition is such that I can clearly see and hear the people of heaven and those of hell. If you permit me, I will inform you about the secret thoughts and inner states of every one of your companions." The Prophet bade him hold his tongue, and say no more; but asked him, "What is your desire?" He said, "To fight in the way of God."

According to the Qur'an, furbishing of the human heart exalts a human being to such a point that, in the words of Ali (A), even if the veils that conceal the Unseen be removed from in front of him, there is nothing that can enhance his faith. The teachings of the Qur'an are meant to educate man to become a being equipped with the power of knowledge and reason on the one hand, and possessed of a pure heart and sound feeling on the other. They aim to train a human being who is able to employ his reason and heart in the most proper and exalted fashion. The Imams (S) and their true pupils were examples of such human beings.

Concluded: wal-hamdu lillaah.

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An Introduction to 'Irfan

Martyr Murtada Mutahhari

Vol. IV No. 1

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> This short introduction to irfan is a part of the author's book Ashnai ba ulum e Islami (An Introduction to the Islamic Sciences) written in seven parts, 1) logic, 2) philosophy, 3) kalam, 4) irfan, 5) fiqh, 6) usul al fiqh, 7) hikmat e amali (ethics).

'Irfan is one of the disciplines that originated within the realm of Islamic culture and developed there to attain a high level of sophistication. But before we can begin to discuss 'irfan, we must realize that it can be approached from two viewpoints: the social and the academic. Unlike the scholars of other Islamic disciplines - such as the Quranic commentators (mufassirun), the scholars of hadith (muhaddithun), the jurisprudents (fuqaha'), the theologians (mutakallimun), the philosophers, the men of literature, and the poets - the 'urafa' are a group of scholars who have not only developed their own science, 'irfan, producing great scholars and important books, but have also given rise within the Islamic world to a distinct social grouping. In this the 'urafa' are unique; for the scholars of the other Islamic disciplines - such as the jurisprudents, for instance - form solely academic groupings and are not viewed as a social group distinct from the rest of society.

In view of this distinction the gnostics, when referred to as belonging to a certain academic discipline, are called 'urafa' and when referred to as a social group are generally called Sufis (mutasawwifah).

The 'urafa' and sufis are not regarded as forming a separate sect in Islam, nor do they claim themselves to be such. They are to be found within every Islamic school and sect, yet, at the same time, they coalesce to form a distinct social group. The factors that set them apart from the rest of Islamic society are a distinctive chain of ideas and opinions, a special code governing their social intercourse, dress and even, sometimes, the way they wear their hair and beards, and their living communally in their hospices. (Pers. Khaniqah; Ar-ribat, zawiyah; Turk. tekkiye)

Of course, there are and have always been 'urafa' - particularly amongst the Shi'ah - who bear none of these external signs to distinguish them socially from others; yet, at the same time, they have been profoundly involved in the spiritual methodology of 'irfan (sayr wa suluk). It is these who are the real gnostics; not those who have invented for themselves hundreds of special mannerisms and customs and have brought innovations into being.

In this series of lectures, in which we are taking a general look at Islamic sciences and disciplines, we will not be dealing with the social and sectarian aspect of gnosis, that is to say, tasawwuf (sufism). We will limit ourselves to an examination of 'irfan as a discipline and branch amongst the branches of Islam's scientific culture. To look thoroughly at the social aspects of sufism would require us to examine its causes and origins, the effects - positive and negative, beneficial and detrimental - it has and has had upon Islamic society, the nature of the relations between the sufis and other Islamic groups, the hue it has given to the whole of Islamic teachings, and the role it has played in the diffusion of Islam throughout the world. This is far beyond the range of these lectures, and here we will consider the tradition of 'irfan only as a science and as one of the academic disciplines of Islam.

'Irfan, as a scientific and academic discipline, itself has two branches: the practical and the theoretical. The practical aspect of 'irfan describes and explains the relationship and responsibilities the human being bears towards itself, towards the world and towards God. Here, 'irfan is similar to ethics (akhlaq), both of them being practical sciences. There do exist differences, however, and later we will explain them.

The practical teaching of 'irfan is also called the itinerary of the spiritual path (sayr wa suluk; lit. 'traveling and journeying'). Here, the wayfarer (salik) who desires to reach the goal of the sublime peak of humanness - that is to say, tawhid - is told where to set off, the ordered stages and stations that he must traverse, the states and conditions he will undergo at these stations, and the events that will befall him. Needless to say, all these stages and stations must be passed under the guidance and supervision of a mature and perfect example of humanity who, having traveled this path, is aware of the manners and ways of each station. If not, and there is no perfect human being to guide him on his path, he is in danger of going astray.

The perfect man, the master, who must necessarily accompany the novice on the spiritual journey according to the 'urafa', has been called in their vocabulary as Ta'ir al-quds (the Holy Bird) and Khidr:

> Accompany my zeal on the path, O Ta'ir al-Quds,
> The path to the goal is long, and I new to the journey.
> Leave not this stage without the company of Khidr,
> There is darkness ahead; be afraid of losing the way.

Of course, there is a world of difference between the tawhid of the 'arif and the general view

of tawhid. For the 'arif, tawhid is the sublime peak of humanness and the final goal of his spiritual journey, while for the ordinary people, and even the philosophers, tawhid means the essential Unity of the Necessary Being. For the 'arif, tawhid means that the ultimate reality is only God, and everything other than God is mere appearance, not reality. The 'arif's tawhid means that 'other than God there is nothing'. For the 'arif, tawhid means following a path and arriving at the stage when he sees nothing but God. However, this view of tawhid is not accepted by the opponents of the 'urafa', and some of them have declared such a view to be heretic. Yet the 'urafa' are convinced that this is the only true tawhid, and that the other stages of it cannot be said to be free of polytheism (shirk).

The 'urafa' do not see the attainment of the ideal stage of tawhid to be the function of reason and reflection. Rather they consider it to be the work of the heart, and attained through struggle, through the journeying, and through purifying and disciplining the self.

This, however, is the practical aspect of 'irfan, which is not unlike ethics in this respect, for both discuss a series of things that 'ought to be done'. However, there are differences, and the first of these is that 'irfan discusses the human being's relationship with itself, with the world and with God, and its primal concern is man's relationship with God. Systems of ethics, on the other hand, do not all consider it necessary for the relationship between man and God to be discussed; it is only the religious ethical systems that give importance and attention to this matter.

The second difference is that the methodology of spiritual progression, sayr wa suluk, as the words sayr (traveling) and suluk (journeying) imply, is a dynamic one, while ethics is static. That is, 'irfan speaks about a point of departure, a destination, and the stages and stations which, in their correct order, the wayfarer must traverse in order to arrive at the final destination. In the 'arif's view, there really is a path before the human being - a path that is actual and not in the least a metaphor - and this path must be followed stage by stage, station by station; to arrive at any station without having traversed the preceding one is, in the 'arif's view, impossible. Thus the 'arif views the human soul to be a living organism, like a seedling or like a child, whose perfection lies in growth and maturation in accordance with a particular system and order.

In ethics, however, the subjects are handled solely as a series of virtues, such as righteousness, honesty, sincerity, chastity, generosity, justice, and preferring others over oneself (ithar), to name but a few, with which the soul must be adorned. In the view of ethics, the human soul is rather like a house to be furnished with a series of beautiful objects, pictures and decorations, and no importance is attached to a particular sequence. It is not important where one begins or where one ends. It is of no consequence whether one starts at the ceiling or at the walls, at the top of a wall or at the bottom and so on. On the contrary, in 'irfan the ethical elements are discussed in a dynamic perspective.

The third difference between these two disciplines is that the spiritual elements of ethics are limited to concepts and ideas that are generally commonplace, while the spiritual elements of 'irfan are much more profound and expansive. In the spiritual methodology of 'irfan, much mention is made of the heart and the states and happenings it will experience, and these experiences are known only to the wayfarer of the path during the course of his struggles and his journey on the path, while other people have no idea of these states and happenings.

The other branch of 'irfan is related to interpretation of being, that is, God, the universe, and the human being. Here 'irfan resembles philosophy, for both seek to understand existence, whereas practical 'irfan seeks, like ethics, to change the human being. However, just as there are differences between practical 'irfan and ethics, so also there exist differences between theoretical 'irfan and philosophy, and in the following section we will explain these differences.

Theoretical Irfan:

Theoretical 'irfan, as said before, is concerned with ontology, and discusses God, the world, and the human being. This aspect of 'irfan resembles theological philosophy (falsafeh-ye ilahi), which also seeks to describe being. Like theological philosophy, 'irfan also defines its subject, essential principles and problems, but whereas philosophy relies solely upon rational principles for its arguments, 'irfan bases its deductions on principles discovered through mystic experience (kashf) and then reverts to the language of reason to explain them.

The rationalistic deductions of philosophy can be likened to studying a passage written originally in the same language; the arguments of 'irfan, on the other hand, are like studying something that has been translated from some other language in which it was originally written. To be more precise, the 'arif wishes to explain those things which he claims to have witnessed with his heart and his entire being by using the language of reason.

The ontology of 'irfan is in several ways profoundly different from the ontology of philosophers. In the philosopher's view, both God and other things have reality, with the difference that while God is the Necessary Being (wajib al-wujud) and Existing-By-Himself, things other than God are only possible existents (mumkin al-wujud), existing- through-another, and are effects of the Necessary Being. However, the 'arif's ontology has no place for things other than God as existing alongside Him, even if they are effects of which He is the cause; rather, the Divine Being embraces and encompasses all things. That is to say, all things are names, qualities, and manifestations of God, not existents alongside Him.

The aim of the philosopher also differs from that of the 'arif. The philosopher wishes to understand the world; he wishes to form in his mind a correct and relatively complete picture of the realm of existence. The philosopher considers the highest mark of human perfection to lie in perceiving, by way of reason, the exact nature of existence, so that the macrocosm finds

a reflection within his mind while he in turn becomes a rational microcosm. Thus it is said when defining philosophy that: [Philosophy is] the (final) development of a rational knower ('alim) into an actual world ('alam).

This means that philosophy is a study whereby a human being becomes a rational microcosm similar to the actual macrocosm. But the 'arif, on the other hand, would have nothing to do with reason and understanding; he wishes to reach the very kernel and reality of existence, God, to become connected to it and witness it.

In the 'arif's view, human perfection does not mean having a picture of the realm of existence in one's mind; rather it is to return, by means of treading the spiritual path of progression, to the origin from which one has come, to overcome the separation of distance between oneself and the Divine Essence, and, in the realm of nearness, to obliterate one's finite self to abide in Divine Infinitude.

The tools of the philosopher are reason, logic and deduction, while the tools of the 'arif are the heart, spiritual struggle, purification and disciplining of the self, and an inner dynamism.

Later, when we come to the world-view of 'irfan, we shall also discuss how it differs from the world-view of philosophy.

'Irfan, both practical and theoretical, is closely connected with the holy religion of Islam. Like every other religion - in fact more than any other religion - Islam has explained the relationships of man with God, with the world, and with himself; and it has also given attention to describing and explaining existence.

Now, the question inevitably arises here about the relation between the ideas of 'irfan and the teachings of Islam. Of course, the 'urafa' never claim that they have something to say that is above or beyond Islam, and they are earnest in their denials of any such imputations. In fact, they claim to have discovered more of the realities of Islam, and that they are the true Muslims. Whether in the practical teaching of 'irfan or the theoretical, the 'urafa' always support their views by referral to the Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Imams, and the practice of the eminent amongst the Prophet's Companions.

However, others have held different views about the 'urafa', and these may be mentioned:

(a) A group of muhaddithun and jurisprudents has been of the view that the 'urafa' are not practically bound to Islam, and that their referrals to the Quran and the Sunnah are merely a ruse to deceive the simple-minded people and to draw to themselves the hearts of the Muslims. This group is of the view that 'irfan, basically, has no connection with Islam.

(b) A group of modernists who do not have favourable relations with Islam and are ready to

give a tumultuous welcome to anything that gives the appearance of freedom from the observances prescribed by the Shari'ah (ibahah) and which can be interpreted as a movement or uprising in the past against Islam and its laws, like the first group, believe that in practice the 'urafa' had no faith or belief in Islam, and that 'irfan and tasawwuf was a movement of the non-Arab peoples against Islam and the Arabs, disguised under the robes of spirituality.

This group and the first are united in their view that the 'urafa' are opposed to Islam. The difference between them is that the first group considers Islam to be sacred and, by banking on the Islamic sentiments of the Muslim masses, wishes to condemn the 'urafa' and, in this way, to hoot them off from the stage of the Islamic sciences. The second group, however, by leaning on the great personalities of the 'urafa'- some of whom are of world-renown - wishes to use them as a means of propaganda against Islam. They detract Islam on the grounds that the subtle and sublime ideas of 'irfan found in Islamic culture are in fact alien to Islam. They consider that these elements entered Islamic culture from outside, for, they say, Islam and its ideas thrive on a far lower level. This group also claims that the 'urafa's citations of the Quran and hadith were solely due to dissimulation and fear of the masses. This, they claim, was a means for them to save their lives.

(c) Besides the above two, there is also a third group which takes a rather neutral view of 'irfan. The view of this group is that 'irfan and sufism contain many innovations and deviations that do not accord with the Quran and the traditions; that this is more true of the practical teaching of 'irfan than its theoretical ideas, especially where it takes a sectarian aspect. Yet, they say, the 'urafa', like the Islamic scholars of other ranks and the majority of Islamic sects, have had the most sincere intentions towards Islam, never wishing to make any assertions contrary to its teachings. It is quite possible that they have made mistakes, in the same way as the other types of scholars - theologians, philosophers, Quranic commentators, and jurisprudents - have made mistakes, but this has never been due to an evil intention towards Islam.

In the view of this group, the issue of the 'urafa's supposed opposition to Islam was raised by those who harbored a special prejudice either against 'irfan or against Islam. If a person were to disinterestedly study the books of the 'urafa', provided that he is acquainted with their terminology and language, although he might come across many a mistake, he will not doubt the sincerity of their complete devotion to Islam.

Of the three views, I prefer the third. I do not believe that the 'urafa' have had evil intentions towards Islam. At the same time I believe that it is necessary for those having specialized knowledge of 'irfan and of the profound teachings of Islam to undertake an objective research and disinterested study of the conformity of the issues of 'irfan with Islamic teachings.

Shari'ah, Tariqah and Haqiqah:

One of the important points of contention between the 'urafa' and the non-'urafa', especially the jurisprudents, is the particular teaching of 'irfan regarding the Shari'ah, the Tariqah (the Way) and the Haqiqah (the Reality). Both agree in saying that the Shari'ah, the body of Islamic laws, is based upon a series of realities and beneficial objectives. The jurisprudents generally interpret these goals to consist of certain things that lead the human being to felicity, that is, to the highest possible level of benefit from God's material and spiritual favors to man. The 'urafa', on the other hand, believe that all the paths end in God, and that all goals and realities are merely the means, causes and agencies that impel the human being towards God.

The jurisprudents say only that underlying the laws of the Shariah is a series of benign objectives, that these objectives constitute the cause and spirit of the Shari'ah, and that the only way of attaining these objectives is to act in accordance with the Shari'ah. But the 'urafa' believe that the realities and objectives underlying the laws of the Shari'ah are of the nature of stations and stages on the human being's ascent towards God and in the process of man's access to the ultimate reality.

The 'urafa' believe that the esoteric aspect of the Shari'ah is the Way, the Tariqah, at whose end is the Reality (al-Haqiqah), that is tawhid (in the sense mentioned earlier), which is a stage acquired after the obliteration of the 'arif's self and his egoism. Thus the gnostic believes in three things: the Shari'ah, the Tariqah, and the Haqiqah, and that the Shari'ah is the means to, or the shell of the Tariqah, and the Tariqah again is the means to or the shell of the kernel of Haqiqah.

We have explained how the jurisprudents view Islam in the lectures on kalam.[1] They believe that the Islamic teachings can be grouped into three branches. The first of these is kalam, which deals with the principal doctrines (usul al-'aqa'id). In matters related to the doctrines it is necessary for the human being to acquire, through reason, shakeless belief and faith.

The second branch is ethics (akhlaq). It sets forth the instructions about one's duty in regard to ethical virtues and vices.

The third branch, fiqh, deals with the laws (ahkam), which relate to our external actions and behavior.

These three branches of Islamic teachings are separate from each other. The branch of kalam is related to thought and reason; the branch of akhlaq is related to the self, its faculties and habits; and the branch of fiqh is related to the organs and limbs of the body.

However, on the subject of doctrines, the 'urafa' do not consider merely mental and rational belief to be sufficient. They claim that whatever is to be believed in must be arrived at; one

must strive to remove the veils between oneself and those realities.

Similarly, with respect to the second branch they do not consider ethics to be adequate on account of its being static and limited. In place of a philosophical ethics, they suggest a spiritual methodology (sayr wa suluk) with its particular composition.

Finally, in the third branch, they have no criticisms; only in specific instances do they express opinions that could, possibly, be taken as being opposed to the laws of fiqh.

These three branches are, therefore, termed by the 'urafa' as Shari'ah, Tariqah, and Haqiqah. Yet they believe that in exactly the same way as the human being cannot be divided into three sections, that is, the body, the self, and reason, which are not separate from each other and form an indivisible whole of which they constitute inward and outward aspects, so it is with the Shari'ah, the Tariqah, and the Haqiqah. One is outward shell, another is inward kernel, and the third is the kernel of the kernel. There is a difference, however, in that the 'urafa' consider the stages of human existence to be more than three; that is, they believe in a stage that transcends the domain of reason. God willing, this shall be explained later.

The Origins of Islamic 'Irfan:

In order to understand any discipline or science, it is essential to study its history and the historical developments associated with it. One must also be acquainted with the personalities who have originated or inherited it and with its source books. In this lecture, and the fourth one, we will turn to these matters.

The first issue to arise is whether Islamic 'irfan is a discipline that originated in the Islamic tradition, such as fiqh, usul al-fiqh, tafsir, and 'ilm al-hadith. That is, is it one of those disciplines that were originated by the Muslims who, having received in Islam the original inspiration, sources and raw material, developed them by discovering their rules and principles? Or is it one of those sciences that found their way into the Islamic world from outside, like medicine and mathematics, which were then developed further by the Muslims in the environment of Islamic civilization and culture? Or is there a third possibility?

The 'urafa' themselves maintain the first of these alternatives, and are in no way ready to admit any other. Some orientalists, however, have insisted - and some still insist - on the second view that 'irfan and its subtle and sublime ideas have come into the Islamic world from outside. Sometimes they maintain a Christian origin for it, and claim that mysticism in Islam is the result of early contact of the Muslims with Christian monks. At other times they claim it to be a result of the Persians' reaction against Islam and the Arabs. Then again sometimes they make it entirely a product of Neo-Platonism, which itself was composed of the ideas of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras, influenced by Alexandrian gnosticism and the views and beliefs of Judaism and Christianity. Sometimes they claim it to be derived from

Buddhism. Similarly, the opponents of 'irfan in the Islamic world also strive to show the whole of 'irfan and sufism as being alien to Islam, and for this purpose they too maintain that gnosis has non-Islamic origins.

A third view admits that 'irfan, whether practical or theoretical, draws its primary inspiration and material from Islam itself; having taken this material, it has tried to give it a structure by devising certain rules and principles and in this process has also been influenced by external currents, specially the ideas of scholasticism and philosophy, especially of the Illuminationist school. Now there are a number of questions which arise in this context. Firstly, to what extent have the 'urafa' been successful in developing correct rules and principles for structuring their material? Have the 'urafa' been as successful in carrying this out as the jurisprudents? To what extent have the 'urafa' felt themselves bound not to deviate from the actual principles of Islam? And, similarly, to what extent has 'irfan been influenced by the ideas of outside traditions? Has 'irfan assimilated these external ideas by shaping them in its particular moulds, and used them in its development? Or, contrarily, have the waves of these foreign currents carried away 'irfan in their flow?

Each of these questions requires a separate study and careful research. But that which is certain is that 'irfan has derived its basic sources of inspiration from Islam itself and from nowhere else. Let us consider this point.

Those who accept the first view, and to some extent also those who take the second view, see Islam as being a simple religion, popular and unsophisticated, free of all sorts of mysteries and difficult or unintelligible profundities. To them, the doctrinal system of Islam rests on tawhid (monotheism), which means that just as a house has a builder other than itself, so the world has a transcendent Creator other than itself. Also, the basis of man's relationship with the enjoyments of this world is, in their view, zuhd (abstinence). In their definition of zuhd, it means refraining from the ephemeral pleasures of this world in order to attain the everlasting enjoyments of the Hereafter. Besides these, there are a series of simple and practical rituals and laws that are handled by fiqh.

Therefore, in this group's view, that which the 'urafa' call tawhid is an idea that goes beyond the simple monotheism of Islam; for the 'arif's view of tawhid is existentialist monism in the sense that he believes that nothing exists except God, His Names, Attributes, and manifestations.

The 'arif's conception of the spiritual path (sayr wa suluk), likewise, they say, also goes beyond the zuhd enjoined by Islam, for the spiritual path of 'irfan involves a number of ideas and concepts - such as love of God, annihilation in God, epiphany - that are not to be found in Islamic piety.

Similarly, the 'arif's concept of the Tariqah goes beyond the Shari'ah of Islam; for the practice

of the Tariqah involves matters unknown to fiqh.

Furthermore, in the view of this group, the pious among the Holy Prophet's Companions whom the 'urafa' claim to be their precursors were no more than pious men. Their souls knew nothing of the spiritual path of 'irfan and its tawhid. They were simple otherworldly people who abstained from worldly pleasures and directed their attention to the Hereafter and whose souls were dominated by mixed feelings of fear and hope - fear of the punishment of Hell and hope of the rewards of Paradise. That is all.

In reality this view can in no way be endorsed. The primal sources of Islam are far more extensively richer than what this group - out of ignorance or knowingly - supposes. Neither the Islamic concept of tawhid is as simple and empty as they suppose, nor Islam limits man's spirituality to a dry piety, nor were the pious Companions of the Holy Prophet simple ascetics, nor is the Islamic code of conduct confined to the actions of bodily limbs and organs.

In this lecture, brief evidence will be produced that will suffice to show that Islam's fundamental teachings are capable of having inspired a chain of profound spiritual ideas, both in the theoretical and the practical realms of 'irfan. However, the question of the extent to which the Islamic mystics have used and benefited from Islam's fundamental teachings and the extent to which they may have deviated, is one that we cannot go into in these short lectures.

On the subject of tawhid, the Holy Quran never likens God and the creation to a builder and a house. The Quran identifies God as the Creator of the world, stating at the same time that His Holy Essence is everywhere and with everything:

> Wither so ever you turn, there is the Face of God.... (2:115)
>
> ... And We are nearer to him than the jugular vein. (50:16)
>
> He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; .... (57:3)

Evidently, these kind of verses represent a call to the thinking minds to a conception of tawhid which goes beyond commonplace monotheism. A tradition of al-Kafi states that God revealed the opening verses of the Sura al-Hadid and the Sura al-'Ikhlas because He knew that in future generations there will emerge people who will think profoundly about tawhid.

As to the spiritual path of 'irfan, in which a series of stages leading to ultimate nearness to God are conceived, it suffices to take into account the Quranic verses which mention such notions as liqa 'Allah (meeting with God), ridwan Allah (God's good pleasure), or those which relate to revelation (wahy), ilham (inspiration), and the angels' speaking to others who are not

prophets - for instance, Mary - and especially the verses relating to the Holy Prophet's Ascension (mi'raj; 17:1).

In the Quran there is mention of the 'commanding self' (al-nafs al-'ammarah; 12:53), the 'self-accusative self' (al-nafs al-lawwamah; 75:2), and the 'contented self' (al-nafs al-mutma'innah; 89:27). There is mention of 'acquired knowledge' (al-'ilm al-'ifadi) and inspired knowledge (al-'ilm al-ladunni; 18:65), and of forms of guidance resulting from spiritual struggle:

> And those who struggle in Us, We will surely guide them to Our paths ...
> (29:69)

Mention is made in the Quran of the purification of the self, and it is counted as one of the things leading to salvation and deliverance:

> (By the self) ... verily he who purifies it has succeeded, while he who corrupts it has indeed failed. (91:7-10)

There is also repeated mention there of love of God as a passion above all other human loves and attractions.

The Quran also speaks about all the particles of creation glorifying and praising God (17:44), and this is phrased in a way to imply that if one were to perfect his understanding, he would be able to perceive their praise and magnification of God. Moreover, the Quran raises the issue of the Divine breath in relation to the nature and constitution of the human being (32:9).

This, and much more besides, is sufficient to have inspired a comprehensive and magnificent spirituality regarding God, the world, and man, particularly regarding his relationship with God.

As previously mentioned, we are not considering how the Muslim 'urafa' have made use of these resources, or whether their utilization has been correct or incorrect. We are considering whether there did exist such great resources that could have provided effective inspiration for 'irfan in the Islamic world. Even if we suppose that those usually classed as 'urafa' could not make proper use of them, others who are not classed as such did make use of them.

In addition to the Quran, the traditions, sermons, supplications (du'a'), polemical dialogues (ihtijajat)* and the biographies of the great figures of Islam, all show that the spiritual life current in the early days of Islam was not merely a lifeless type of asceticism blended with a worship performed in the hope of the rewards of Paradise. Concepts and notions are found in the traditions, sermons, supplications, and polemical dialogues that stand at a very high level of sublimity. Similarly, the biographies of the leading personalities of the early days of Islam display many instances of spiritual ecstasy, visions, occurrences, inner insights, and burning

spiritual love. We will now relate an example of it.

Al-Kafi relates that one morning after performing the dawn prayer, a young man (Harithah ibn Malik ibn Nu'man al-'Ansari) caught the Prophet's eye. Lean and pale, his eyes sunken, he gave the impression of being unaware of his own condition and of being unable to keep his balance. "How are you?" inquired the Prophet . "I have attained certain faith," the youth replied. "What is the sign of your certainty?" the Prophet asked.

The youth replied that his certainty had immersed him in grief. It kept him awake at night (in worship) and thirsty by day (in fasting), and had separated him from the world and its matters so completely that it seemed to him as if he could see the Divine Throne already set up (on the Judgement Day) to settle the people's accounts, that he together with all of mankind were raised from the dead. He said that it seemed to him that even at that moment he could see the people of Paradise enjoying its bounties, and the people of hell suffering torments and he could hear the roar of its flames.

The Holy Prophet (S) turned to his Companions and told them, "This is a man whose heart has been illuminated with the light of faith by God". Then he said to the youth, "Preserve this condition you are in, and do not let it be taken away from you." "Pray for me," the youth replied, "that God may grant me martyrdom."

Not long after this encounter, a battle took place, and the youth, taking part, was granted his wish and was martyred.

The life, utterances and prayers of the Holy Prophet (S) are rich with spiritual enthusiasm and ecstasy, and full of the indications of gnosis, and the 'urafa' often rely on the Prophet's supplications as reference and evidence for their views.

Similarly, the words of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A), to whom nearly all the 'urafa' and sufis trace the origin of their orders, are also spiritually inspiring. I wish to draw attention to two passages of the Nahj al-balaghah. In Khutbah No. 222, 'Ali states:

> Certainly, God, the glorified, has made His remembrance the means of burnishing the hearts, which makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness, and makes them submissive after unruliness. In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been individuals with whom God - precious are His bounties - spoke in whispers through their conscience and intellects.

In Khutbah No. 220, speaking about the men of God, he says:

> He revives his intellect and mortifies his self, until his body becomes lean and

his coarseness turns into refinement. Then an effulgence of extreme brightness shines forth for illuminating the path before him, opening all the doors and leading him straight to the gate of safety and the (permanent) abode. His feet, carrying his body, become fixed in the position of safety and comfort on account of that which engages his heart and on having won the good pleasure of his Lord.

The Islamic supplications, especially those of the Shi'ah, are also replete with spiritual teachings. The Du'a' Kumayl, the Du'a' Abi Hamzah, the supplications of al-Sahifat al-Kamilah and the group of supplications called Sha'baniyyah, all contain the most sublime spiritual ideas.

With the existence of all these resources in Islam, is there a need for us to search for the origin of Islamic 'irfan elsewhere?

This reminds us of the case of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and his protest against the tyrants of his time and his vocal criticism of their practices. Abu Dharr was severely critical of the favoritism, partisan politics, injustice, corruption and tyranny of the post-Prophetic era in which he lived. This led him to suffer torture and exile, and finally it was in exile, deserted and alone, that he passed away from this world.

A number of orientalists have raised the question of what motivated Abu Dharr to act as he did. They are in search of something foreign to the world of Islam to explain his behavior.

George Jurdaq, a Lebanese Christian, provides an answer to these orientalists in his book al-'Imam 'Ali, sawt al-'adalah al-'insaniyyah (Imam 'Ali, the Voice of Human Justice). There he says that he is amazed at those who wish to trace Abu Dharr's mentality to an extra-Islamic source. He says it is as if they see someone standing at the side of a sea or river with a pitcher of water in his hands, and begin to wonder from which pool he has filled his pitcher, and then, completely ignoring the nearby sea or river, go off in search of a pool or pond to explain his full pitcher of water.

What other source other than Islam could have inspired Abu Dharr? Which source could have the power of Islam in inspiring the likes of Abu Dharr to rise against the tyrants of this world such as Mu'awiyah?

Now we see a similar pattern in regard to 'irfan. The orientalists are in search of a non-Islamic source of inspiration of 'irfan, while they completely overlook the great ocean of Islam.

Can we really be expected to overlook all these resources - the Holy Quran, the traditions, the sermons, the polemical dialogues, the supplications, and the biographies - simply in order to

give credence to the view of a group of orientalists and their Eastern followers?

Formerly, the orientalists took great pains to project the origins of Islamic 'irfan as lying outside the original teachings of Islam. Lately, however, such individuals as the English R.A. Nicholson and the French Louis Massignon, after having made extensive studies in Islamic 'irfan, without being unacquainted with Islam in general, have expressly admitted that the principal sources of 'irfan are the Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah.

We will conclude this lecture by quoting a passage by Nicholson from the book The Legacy of Islam:

> (Though Muhammad left no system of dogmatic or mystical theology, the Qur'an contains the raw materials of both. Being the outcome of feeling than reflection, the Prophet's statements about God are formally inconsistent, and while Muslim scholastics have embodied in their creed the aspect of transcendence, the Sufis, following his example, have combined the transcendent aspect with that of immanence, on which, though it is less prominent in the Qur'an, they naturally lay greater emphasis.)[2]
>
> 'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth' (xxiv:35);
> 'He is the first and the last and the outward and the inward' (lvii:3);
> 'there is no god but He; everything is perishing except His Face' (xxviii:88);
> 'Have breathed into him (man) of My spirit' (xv:29);
> 'Verily, We have created man and We know what his soul suggests to him, for We are nigher unto him than the neck-artery' (1:15);
> 'wheresoever ye turn, there is the Face of Allah' (ii:114);
> 'he to whom Allah giveth no light hath no light at all' (xxiv:40).
>
> Surely the seeds of mysticism are here. And, for the early Sufis, the Qur'an is not only the Word of God: it is the primary means of drawing near to Him. By fervent prayer, by meditating profoundly on the text as a whole and in particular on the mysterious passages (xvii:1; liii:1-18) concerning the Night journey and Ascension, they endeavored to reproduce the Prophet's mystical experience in themselves.[3]
>
> ... The doctrine of a mystical union imparted by divine grace goes beyond anything in the Qur'an, but is stated plainly in apocryphal traditions of the Prophet, e.g. God said, "My servant draws nigh unto Me by works of supererogation, and I love him; and when I love him, I am his ear, so that he hears by Me, and his eye, so that he sees by Me, and his tongue, so that he speaks by Me, and his hand, so that he takes by Me."[4]

As repeatedly said before, we are not concerned here with the question whether the 'urafa' have succeeded in correctly utilizing the inspiration provided by Islam; our purpose was to consider whether the main source of their inspiration lay within Islam or outside it.

A Brief History:

The previous lecture dealt with the question of locating the principal origin of Islamic 'irfan, that is, whether there exists in the teachings of Islam and the lives of the Holy Prophet and the Imams a precedent that could have inspired a series of profound and subtle mystical ideas, on a theoretical level, and which could have prompted spiritual enthusiasm and mystical elation on a practical level. The answer to this question was seen to be positive. Now we will continue this discussion.

The genuine teachings of Islam and the lives of its spiritual leaders, so rich with spirituality and spiritual splendor, which have provided the inspiration for profound spirituality in the Islamic world, are not encompassed by that which is termed as 'irfan or sufism. However, it is beyond the scope of these lectures to discuss other parts of Islamic teachings that do not bear this name. We will continue our discussion on the branch that is labeled as 'irfan or sufism, and obviously the limited scope of these lectures does not permit us to go into a critical research. Here we will try to give an outline of the currents and events that have occurred within this branch. For this purpose, it appears to be appropriate that we begin by providing a simple history of 'irfan or Sufism from the beginnings of Islam until at least the 10th/16th century, before turning, so far as is practical in a venture such as this, to an analysis of the issues of 'irfan.

What seems certain is that in the early era of Islam, that is throughout the 1st/7th century at least, there existed no group amongst the Muslims known as 'urafa' or sufis. The name sufi was first used in the 2nd/8th century.

The first person to be called by the name sufi is Abu Hashim al- Kufi. He lived in the 2nd/8th century and he it was who first built at Ramlah, in Palestine, a hospice for worship by a group of ascetically- minded Muslims.[5] The date of Abu Hashim's death is not known, but he was the teacher of Sufyan al-Thawri who died in 161/777.

Abu al-Qasim Qushayri, himself an eminent 'arif and sufi, states that the name sufi had appeared before the year 200/815. Nicholson also states that the name appeared towards the end of the 2nd century H. From a tradition contained in kitab al-ma'ishah (vol. V) of al-Kafi, it appears that a group - Sufyan al-Thawri and a number of others - existed in the time of al-'Imam al-Sadiq (A) (that is to say, during the first half of the 2nd century H.) who were already called by this name.

If Abu Hashim al-Kufi was the first to be called sufi, then, since he was the teacher of Sufyan

al-Thawri who died in 161/777, this name was first used during the first half of the 2nd century H., not at its end (as Nicholson and others have stated). Nor does there appear to be any doubt that the reason for the name being sufiyyah was their wearing of wool (sufi: wool). Due to their asceticism, the sufis abstained from wearing fine garments, and instead followed a practice of wearing clothes made of coarse wool.

As for the date this group first began to call themselves 'urafa', again there is no precise information. All that is certain, as confirmed by the remarks quoted of Sari Saqati (d. 243/867) [6], is that the term was current in the third century H. However, in the book al-Luma' of Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi, one of the reliable texts of 'irfan and sufism, a phrase is quoted of Sufyan al-Thawri which gives the impression that this term appeared sometime in the second century. [7]

At all events, there was no group known as sufis during the first century H. This name appeared in the 2nd century H., and it seems that it was during the same century that the sufis emerged as a particular group, not in the third century as is the belief of some people. [8]

However, even though no special group existed in the first century by the name of 'urafa' or sufis or any other name, it does not imply that the eminent Companions were merely pious and ascetic persons and that all of them led lives of simple faith devoid of spiritual depth. Perhaps it is true that some of the pious Companions knew nothing more beyond mere piety and worship, yet a group of them possessed a powerful spiritual life. Nor were they all of the same level. Even Salman and Abu Dharr were not of the same degree. Salman enjoyed a degree of faith that Abu Dharr could not have withstood. Many traditions have come to us telling us:

> If Abu Dharr knew what was in Salman's heart, he would (considering him a heretic) have killed him. [9]

Now we will list the different generations of the 'urafa' and sufis from the 2nd/8th to the 10/16th century.

'Urafa' of the Second/Eighth Century:

1. Al-Hasan al-Basri

The history of what is termed as 'irfan, like kalam, begins with al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728). He was born in 22/642 and lived for eighty-eight years, having spent nine-tenths of his life in the first century H.

Of course, al-Hasan al-Basri was never known by the term sufi, but there are three reasons for

counting him amongst the sufis. The first is that he compiled a book called Ri'ayah li huquq Allah (Observance of the Duties to Allah) [10], which can be recognized as the first book on sufism. A unique manuscript of this book exists at Oxford. Nicholson has this to say on the subject:

> The first Muslim to give an experimental analysis of the inner life was Harith al-Muhasibi of Basrah ... 'The Path' (tariqah), as described by later writers, consists of acquired virtues (maqamat) and mystical states (ahwal). The first stage is repentance or conversion; then comes a series of others, e.g. renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, each being a preparation for the next.[11]

Secondly, the 'urafa' themselves trace their orders back to al- Hasan al-Basri; and from him to 'Ali (A), such as the chain of the shaykhs of Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Khayr.[12] Similarly, Ibn al-Nadim, in his famous al-Fihrist, traces the chain of Abu Muhammad Ja'far al-Khuldi back to al-Hasan al-Basri, stating that al-Hasan al-Basri had met seventy of the Companions who had fought at Badr.

Thirdly, some of the stories related of al-Hasan al-Basri give the impression that he was in fact part of a group that in later times became known as sufis. We will relate some of these stories when appropriate later on.

2. Malik ibn Dinar:

He was one of those who took asceticism and abstinence from pleasure to the extreme. Many stories are told about him in this regard. He died in the year 130/747.

3. Ibrahim ibn Adham:

The famous story of Ibrahim ibn Adham resembles that of Buddha. It is said that he was the ruler of Balkh when something happened that caused him to repent and enter the ranks of the sufis.

'Urafa' attach great importance to this man, and a very interesting tale is told about him in Rumi's Mathnawi. He died around the year 161/777.

4. Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyyah:

This woman is one of the wonders of her time (d. 135/752 or 185/801). She was named Rabi'ah because she was the fourth daughter of her family (rabi'ah: fem. gender of fourth). She is not to be confused with Rabi'ah al-Shamiyyah, who was also a mystic and a contemporary of Jami and lived in the 9th/15th century.

Lofty sayings and soaring mystical verses are recorded of Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyyah,' and she is noted for amazing spiritual states (halat).

5. Abu Hashim al-Sufi of Kufah:

The date of this man's death is unknown. All that we can say is that he was the teacher of Sufyan al- Thawri; who died in 161/777. He appears to be the first person to have been called sufi. Sufyan says about him: "If it were not for Abu Hashim I would not have known the precise details of ostentation (riya')."

6. Shaqiq al-Balkhi:

He was the pupil of Ibrahim ibn Adham. According to the author of Rayhanat al-'adab, and others quoted in Kashf al-ghummah of 'Ali ibn 'Isa al-'Arbili and Nur al-'absar of al-Shablanji, he once met al-'Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (A) and has given an account of the Imam's great station and miracles. Shaqiq died in 194/810.

7. Ma'ruf al-Karkhi:

He is one of the famous 'urafa'. It is said that his parents were Christian and that he became a Muslim at the hands of al- 'Imam al-Rida (A), learning much from him.

The lines of many orders, according to the claims of the 'urafa', go back to Ma'ruf, and through him to al-'Imam al-Rida, and through al- 'Imam al-Rida to the preceding Imams and thus to the Prophet himself. This chain is therefore termed the 'golden chain' (silsilat al-dhahab). Those known as the Dhahabiyyun generally make this claim.

8. Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyad:

Originally from Merv, he was an Iranian of Arab descent. It is said of him that at first he was a highwayman, and that as he was preparing to carry out a robbery one night he heard the voice of his potential victim, reciting the Quran. This had such an effect on him that he experienced a change of heart and repented. The book Misbah al-Shariah is attributed to him and it is said to consist of a series of lessons that he took from al-'Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A). This book is considered reliable by an erudite scholar of traditions of the last century, the late Hajj Mirza Husayn Nuri, in the epilogue to his Mustadrak al-Wasa'il. Fudayl died in 187/803.

'Urafa' of the Third/Ninth Century:

1. Abu Yazid al-Bistami (Bayazid):

One of the great mystics, it is said Bayazid was the first to speak openly of 'annihilation of the self in God' (fana fi 'Allah') and 'subsistence through God' (baqa' bi 'Allah).

He has said "I came forth from Bayazid-ness as a snake from its skin."

His ecstatic ejaculations (shathiyyat) have led others to call him a heretic. However, the 'urafa' themselves consider him one of those given to mystical 'intoxication' (sukr), that is, he uttered these words when he was beside himself in ecstasy.

Abu Yazid died in 261/874 or 264/877. Some have claimed that he worked as a water carrier in the house of al-'Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A). However, this claim is not supported by history; Abu Yazid was not a contemporary of the Imam.

2. Bishr ibn al-Harith al-Hafi:

One of the famous sufis, he was another who led a corrupt life and then repented.

In his book Minhaj al-karamah, al-'Allamah al-Hilli has related an account that depicts Bishr's repentance as being at the hands of al-'Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (A), and because at the moment of his repentance he was barefoot in the street, he became known as 'al-Hafi' (hafi=barefooted). However, others have given a different reason for his being known as al-Hafi.

Bishr al-Hafi (born near Merv c. 150/767) died in 226/840 or 227/841 in Baghdad.

3. Sari al-Saqati:

One of the friends and companions of Bishr al-Hafi, Sari al-Saqati was one of those who bore affection for the creatures of God and of those who preferred others above themselves.

In his book Wafayat al-'a'yan, Ibn Khallikan writes that Sari once said, "It is thirty years that I have been seeking forgiveness for one phrase, Praise be Allah's, that I allowed to pass my lips." When asked to explain he replied, "One night the bazaar caught fire, and I left my house to see if the fire had reached my shop. When I heard that my shop was safe, I said, 'Praise be Allah's'. Instantly I was brought to my senses with the realization that, granted my shop was unharmed, should I not have been thinking about others'?"

Sa'di is referring to this same story (with slight variations) where he says:

One night someone's chimney kindled a fire, And I heard that half of Baghdad had burnt down. One said, thank God that in the smoke and ashes, My shop has not been damaged. A

man who had seen the world replied, O selfish man, Was your grief for yourself and no other? Would you be satisfied that a town should burn down by fire, If your own dwelling were left unscathed?

Sari was the pupil and disciple (murid) of Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, and the teacher and maternal uncle of Junayd of Baghdad. Sari has many sayings on mystical unity (tawhid), love of God and other matters. It was also he who said: "Like the sun, the 'arif shines on all the world; like the earth, he bears the good and evil of all; like water, he is the source of life for every heart; and like fire he gives his warmth to all and sundry." Sari died in 253/867 at the age of ninety-eight.

4. Harith al-Muhasibi:

He was one of the friends and companions of Junayd. He was called 'al-muhasibi' due to his great diligence in the matter of self-observation and self-reckoning (muhasabah). He was a contemporary of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who, being an opponent of 'ilm al-kalam, rejected Harith al-Muhasibi for entering into theological debates, and this led to the people avoiding him. Born in Basrah in 165/781, he died in 243/857.

5. Junayd of Baghdad:

Originally from Nahaw and, the 'urafa' and sufis have given Junayd the title Sayyid al-Ta'ifah, just as the Shi'ah jurisprudents call al-Shaykh al-Tusi Shaykh al-Ta'ifah.

Junayd is counted as one of the moderate mystics. The kind of ecstatic ejaculations uttered by others were never heard from his lips. He did not even put on the usual dress of the sufis, and dressed like scholars and jurisprudents. It was suggested to him that for the sake of his associates he should wear the sufi dress. He replied: "If I thought clothes were of any importance I would make an outfit of molten iron, for the call of truth is that:

> There is no significance in the (sufi) cloak, Importance lies only in the (inward) glow.

Junayd's mother was the sister of Sari Saqati and Junayd became his pupil and disciple. He was also the pupil of Harith al-Muhasibi. It seems that he died in Baghdad in 298f910 at the age of ninety.

6. Dhu al-Nun al-Misri:

An Egyptian, he was the pupil in jurisprudence of the famous jurisprudent Malik ibn Anas. Jami has called him the leader of the sufis. He it was who first began to use symbolic language and to explain mystical matters through the use of a symbolic terminology which

only the elect could understand.

Gradually this became the standard practice, and mystical concepts were expressed in the form of love-poetry (ghazal) and symbolic expressions. Some believe that Dhu al-Nun also introduced many Neoplatonic ideas into 'irfan and sufism.[13] Dhu al-Nun died in 246/860 in Cairo.

7. Sahl ibn 'Abd Allah al-Tustari:

He is one of the great 'urafa' and sufis. A sect of gnostics who consider the main principle of spirituality to be combatting the self is named 'Sahliyyah' after him. He associated with Dhu al-Nun of Egypt at Mecca. He died in Basrah in 282/895. [14]

8. Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj:

Now famous simply as al-Hallaj, he is one of the most controversial mystics of the Islamic world. The shathiyyat uttered by him are many, and he was accused of apostasy and claiming divinity. The jurisprudents pronounced him an apostate and he was crucified during the reign of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir. The 'urafa' themselves accuse him of disclosing spiritual secrets. Hafiz has this to say about him:

> He said, that friend, who was raised high on the cross,
> His crime was that he used to reveal secrets.

Some consider him no more than a juggler, but the 'urafa' themselves absolve him and say that the statements of al-Hallaj and Bayazid that gave the impression of unbelief were made when they were beside themselves in the state of 'intoxication'.

Al-Hallaj is remembered by the 'urafa' as a martyr. He was executed in 309/913. [15]

'Urafa' of the Fourth/Tenth Century:

1. Abu Bakr al-Shibli:

A pupil and disciple of Junayd of Baghdad and one who had met al-Hallaj, al-Shibli is one of the famous mystics. He was originally from Khurasan. In the book Rawdat al-jannat, and in other biographies, many mystical poems and sayings have been recorded of him.

Khawajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari has said: "The first person to speak in symbols was Dhu al-Nun of Egypt. Then came Junayd and he systematized this science, extended it, and wrote books on it. Al-Shibli, in his turn, took it to the pulpit." Al-Shibli; died in 334/846 at the age

of 87.

2. Abu 'Ali al-Rudbari:

He traced his descent to Nushirwan and the Sasanids, and was a disciple of Junayd. He studied jurisprudence under Abu al-'Abbas ibn Shurayh, and literature under Tha'lab. Due to his versatile knowledge, he was called the 'collector of the Law, the Way, and the Reality' (jami' al-Shari'ah wa al-Tariqah wa al-Haqiqah). He died in 322/934.

3. Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi:

Abu Nasr al-Sarraj is the author of the book al-Luma', one of the principal, ancient and reliable texts of 'irfan and sufism. Many of the shaykhs of the sufi orders were his direct or indirect pupils. He passed away in 378/988 in Tus.

4. Abu Fadl ibn al-Hasan al-Sarakhsi:

He was the pupil and disciple of Abu Nasr al-Sarraj, and the teacher of Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Khayr. He was a mystic of great fame. He died in 400/1009.

5. Abu 'Abd Allah al-Rudbari:

He was the son of Abu 'Ali al-Rudbari's sister. He is counted as one of the mystics of Damascus and Syria. He died in 369/979.

6. Abu Talib al-Makki:

The fame of Abu Talib al-Makki rests largely on the book he authored on 'irfan and sufism, Qut al-qulub. This book is one of the principal and earliest texts of 'irfan and sufism. He passed away in 100%/995 or 386/996.

'Urafa' of the Fifth/Eleventh Century:

1. Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Khurqani:

One of the most famous 'urafa', the 'urafa' relate amazing stories about him. Amongst these is one according to which he would go to the grave of Bayazid and converse with his spirit, taking his advice in solving his difficulties. Rumi says:

> After many years had passed since the death of Bayazid Bu'l-Hasan appeared.
> Now and then he would go and sit By the side of his grave in his presence,

Until came the spirit of his shaykh, And as soon as he uttered his problem, it
was solved

Rumi has remembered Shaykh Abu al-Hasan a lot in his Mathnawi, which shows his devotion and attachment to him. It is said that he met with Abu 'Ali Sina, the philosopher, and with Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al- Khayr, the famous 'arif. He died in 425/1033-34.

2. Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Khayr:

One of the most famous of all mystics, Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Khayr is also one of those most noted for their spiritual states (halat). When once asked the definition of tasawwuf, he replied: "Tasawwuf is that you give up whatever is on your mind, give away whatever is in your hand, and to give over yourself to whatever you are capable of."

He met with Abu 'Ali Sina. One day Abu 'Ali participated in a meeting at which Abu Sa'id was preaching. Abu Sa'id was speaking about the necessity of deeds, and about obedience and disobedience to God. Abu 'Ali recited these verses (ruba'i):

We are those who have befriended your forgiveness,
And seek riddance from obedience and disobedience.
Wherever your favour and grace is to be found,
Let the not-done be like the done, the done like the not-done.

Abu Sa'id immediately replied:

O you who have done no good, and done much bad,
And then aspire after your own salvation,
Do not rely on forgiveness, for never
Was the not-done like the done, the done like the not-done.

The following ruba'i is also of Abu Sa'id:

Tomorrow when the six directions fade away,
Your worth will be the worth of your awareness.
Strive for virtue, for on the Day of Retribution,
You shall rise in the form of your qualities.

Abu Sa'id passed away in the year 440/1048.

3. Abu 'Ali al-Daqqaq al-Nishaburi:

He is considered one of those who combined in himself the expertise of the Shari'ah and the

Tariqah. He was a preacher and an exegete (mufassir) of the Quran. To such an extent did he use to weep while reciting supplications (munajat) that he was given the title 'the lamenting shaykh' (shaykh-e nawhahgar). He passed away in 100%/1014 or 412/1021.

4. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al-Hujwiri:

He is the author of Kashf al-Mahjub, one of the famous sufi books and one which has recently been published. He died in 470/1077.

5. Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari:

A descendant of the great Companion of the Prophet, Abu Ayyub al-'Ansari, Khwajah 'Abd Allah is himself one of the most famous and pious of all 'urafa'. His fame rests largely on his elegant aphorisms, munajat, and ruba'iyyat.

Amongst his sayings is this:

> When a child you are low, when a youth you are intoxicated, when old you are decrepit; so when will you worship God?

He has also said:

> Returning evil for evil is the trait of a dog; returning good for good is the trait of a donkey; returning good for evil is the work of Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari.

The following ruba'i is also his:

> It is a great fault for a man to remain aloof,
> Setting oneself above all the creation.
> Learn thy lesson from the pupil of the eye,
> That sees everyone but not itself.

Khwajah 'Abd Allah was born in Herat where he died and was buried in 481/1088. For this reason he is known as 'the Sage of Herat' (Pir-e Herat).

Khwajah 'Abd Allah authored many books, the best-known of which, Manazil al-sa'irin, is a didactic manual on sayr wa suluk. It is one of the most well-written works of 'irfan, and many commentaries have been written on it.

6. Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali:

One of the best-known scholars of Islam whose fame has penetrated the East and the West, he combined in his person the knowledge of the rational and traditional sciences (ma'qul wa manqul). He became head of the Nizamiyyah Academy in Baghdad and held the highest position of his age accessible to any scholar. However, feeling that neither his knowledge nor his position could satisfy his soul, he withdrew from public life and engaged in disciplining and purifying his soul.

He spent ten years in Palestine, far from all who knew him, and it was during this period that he became inclined towards 'irfan and sufism. He never again accepted any post or position. Following his period of solitary asceticism, he wrote his famous Ihya' 'ulum al-Din ('Reviving the Sciences of Religion'). He died in his home city of Tus in the year 505/1111.

'Urafa' of the Sixth/Twelfth Century:

1. 'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani:

Of the most enthusiastic of mystics, 'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani was the disciple of Ahmad al-Ghazali's, younger brother of Muhammad, who was also a mystic. The author of many books, he also composed some brilliant poetry that, however, was not altogether free of theopathetic exclamations (shathiyyat). Charges of heresy were brought against him; he was executed, and his body burnt and his ashes cast to the winds. He was killed around 525-533/ 1131-1139.

2. Sanai Ghaznawi:

A famous poet, his verse is loaded with profound mystic sentiments. Rumi, in his Mathnawi, has cited some of his sayings and expounded them. He died around the middle of the 6th/12th century.

3. Ahmad Jami:

Known as "Zhand-e Pil", Jami is one of the most celebrated of 'urafa' and sufis. His tomb lies at Turbat-e Jam, near the border between Iran and Afghanistan, and is well-known. Following lines are among the verses he composed on fear (khawf) and hope (raja'):

> Be not haughty, for the mount of many a mighty man
> Has been hamstrung among rocks in the desert;
> But neither despair, for even wine-drinking libertines
> Have suddenly arrived at the destination by a single song.

Similarly, on moderation between generosity and thrift he offers the following advice:

Be not like an adze, drawing all to yourself,
Nor like a plane, gaining nothing for your work;
In matters of livelihood, learn from the saw,
It draws some to itself, and lets some scatter.

Ahmad Jami died around the year 536/1141.

4. 'Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani:

He is one of the most controversial figures of the Islamic world. To him is attributed the Qadiriyyah order of sufis.

His grave at Baghdad is well known and famous. He is amongst those from whom many supplications and high-flying sayings have been recorded. He was a sayyid descended from al-'Imam al-Hasan (A). He died in 560/1164 or 561/1165.

5. Shaykh Ruzbihan Baqli Shirazi:

He is known as Shaykh-e Shattah on account of his prolific theopathetic exclamations. In recent years some of his books have been published, mainly through the efforts of the orientalists. He died in 606/1209.

'Urafa' of the Seventh/Thirteenth Century:

This century has produced some mystics of the highest stature. We will mention some of them in a chronological order:

1. Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubra:

One of the greatest and most celebrated of mystics, the chains of many orders go back to him. He was the pupil and disciple of Shaykh Ruzbihan, and was also his son-in-law. He had many pupils and disciples, amongst whom was Baha' al-Din Walad, the father of Jalal al-Din Rumi.

He lived in Khuwarizm (in the present day USSR) at the time of the Mongol invasions. Before his city was attacked, he was sent a message informing him that he could lead a party of his family and disciples out of the city to safety. Najm al-Din's reply was that, 'Throughout all the days of comfort I have lived alongside these people. Now that the day of difficulties has come I will not leave them.' He then manfully strapped on a sword and fought alongside the people of the city until he was martyred. This happened in the year 624/1227.

2. Shaykh Farid al-Din al-'Attar:

One of the foremost of mystics, al- 'Attar has works both in verse and in prose. His book Tadhkirat al- 'awifya' on the lives and characters of the sufis and mystics - which begins with al-'Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A) and ends with al-'Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (A) - is considered a source book of documentary significance, and great importance is attached to it by the orientalists.

Similarly, his work Mantiq al-tayr ('The Speech of the Birds') is a masterpiece of mystical literature.

Rumi, commenting about al-'Attar and Sana'i, says:

> 'Attar was the spirit and Sana'i his two eyes,
> We are following in the steps of Sana'i and 'Attar.

Rumi has also said:

> 'Attar passed through seven cities of love,
> While we are yet in the bend of a single lane.

What Rumi means by the 'seven cities of love' are the seven valleys of which al-'Attar speaks in his Mantiq al-tayr. Muhammad Shabistari in his Gulshan-e raz says:

> I am not ashamed of my poetry,
> For, the like of 'Attar a hundred centuries will not see.

Al-'Attar was the pupil and disciple of Shaykh Majd al-Din of Baghdad, who was amongst the pupils and disciples of Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubra. He also benefited from the company of Qutb al-Din Haydar, another of the shaykhs of the age and one after whom the town in which he is buried, Turbat-e Haydariyyah, was named.

Al-'Attar lived during the time of the Mongol invasions, and died - some say at the hands of the Mongols - around 626-28/1228-1230.

3. Shaykh Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi:

He is the author of the celebrated 'Awarif al-ma'arif, an excellent text of 'irfan and sufism.

He claimed descent from Abu Bakr. It is said that he went each year to visit Makkah and al-Madinah. He had met and conversed with 'Abd al- Qadir al-Gilani. Amongst his disciples were the famous poets Shaykh Saidi and Kamal al-Din Isma'il al-'Isfahani. Sa'di had this to say about him:

My wise shaykh the murshid, Shihab, gave me two advices:
One, not to be egocentric,
The other, not to regard others with pessimism.

This Suhrawardi is not the same as the famous philosopher known as Shaykh al-'Ishraq, who was killed around 581-590/1185-1194 in Aleppo, Syria. Suhrawardi the gnostic died around the year 632/1234.

4. Ibn al-Farid al-Misri:

He is considered one of the mystics of the first rank. His mystical poetry, in Arabic, reaches the loftiest summits and is of the greatest elegance. His diwan (collection of poems) has been published several times and has been the subject of many distinguished commentaries. Of those who wrote a commentary on his work was 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, a well-known mystic of the ninth century.

The poetry of Ibn al-Farid in Arabic is comparable to that of Hafiz in Persian. Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi once suggested to him that he should write a commentary on his poems. Ibn al-Farid replied that the commentary of his poems was Ibn al-'Arabi's own al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah.

Ibn al-Farid is of those who went through abnormal 'states' (ahwal). More often than not he was in an ecstatic state and it was in such states that many of his poems were composed. He died in the year 632/1234.

5. Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi:

One of the descendants of Hatim al-Ta'i, Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi was originally from Spain. Most of his iife, however, seems to have been spent in Makkah and Syria. He was a pupil of the sixth-century mystic Shaykh Abu Madyan al-Maghribi al-'Andalusi. Through one intermediary link, the chain of his order goes back to the Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani mentioned above.

Muhyi al-Din, also known by the name Ibn al-'Arabi, is certainly the greatest mystic of Islam. No one else has been able to reach his level, neither before nor after him. Thus he is known by the sobriquet 'al-Shaykh al-'Akbar' (the Greatest Shaykh).

Islamic mysticism, from the time of its first appearance, has made progress one century after another. Each century, as indicated above, produced great mystics who have developed 'irfan, always adding to its heritage. This advancement had always been gradual. But in the 7th/13th century with the appearance of Ibn al-'Arabi 'irfan made a sudden leap and reached the

summit of its perfection.

Ibn al-'Arabi took 'irfan to a stage it had never reached before.

The foundations for the second branch of 'irfan, that is theoretical 'irfan and its attendant philosophy, were laid by Ibn al-'Arabi. In general, the mystics who came after him ate the crumbs from his table.

Besides bringing 'irfan into a new phase, Ibn al-'Arabi was one of the wonders of time. He was an amazing person, and this has led to wildly divergent views about him. Some consider him al-Wali al-Kamil (the Perfect Saint) and the Qutb al-'Aqtab (the Pole of Poles). Others degrade him so much as to regard him a heretic, calling him Mumit al-Din (the Killer of the Faith) or Mahi al-Din (the Effacer of the Faith). Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Mulla Sadra), the great philosopher and Islamic genius, had the greatest respect for him, considering him far greater than Ibn Sina or al-Farabi.

Ibn al-'Arabi authored over two hundred books. Many of his works, or perhaps all of those whose manuscripts are extant (numbering about thirty), have been published. Of his most important books, one is his al-Futahat al-Makkiyyah, a colossal work that is a veritable encyclopedia of 'irfan. Another is his Fusus al-hikam which, although brief, is the most precise and most profound text of 'irfan. Numerous commentaries have been written on it, yet perhaps there have been no more than two or three persons in any age who have been able to understand it.

Ibn al-'Arabi passed away in 638/1240 in the city of Damascus, where his grave is still well known even today.

6. Sadr al-Din Qunawi:

He was the pupil, disciple and son of the wife of Ibn al-'Arabi. He was a contemporary of Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and of Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi. He corresponded with Khwajah Nasir, who paid him great respect. Similarly, at Qunyah(in present day Turkey), there was perfect friendship and cordiality between him and Rumi. Qunawi used to lead the prayers and Rumi would pray behind him, and it has been said that Rumi was his pupil.

There is a story that when one day Rumi came to join Qunawi's circle, he raised himself from his special masnad and offered it to Rumi. Declining, Rumi said that he would have no excuse before God for taking Qunawi's seat. At which Qunawi threw away the masnad, saying, if it did not suit Rumi it would not suit him either.

Qunawi provided the best exposition on the thought and ideas of Ibn al-'Arabi. In fact, without Qunawi it is possible that Ibn al-'Arabi would never have been understood. It was

also through Qunawi that Rumi became aquainted with Ibn al-'Arabi and his school, and it seems that the reason for considering Rumi as having been Qunawi's pupil is that Ibn al-'Arabi's ideas are reflected in Rumi's Mathnawi and in his Diwan-e Shams.

Moreover, students of philosophy and 'irfan have used Qunawi's books as textbooks for the last six centuries. His three famous books are: Miftah al-ghayb, al-Nusus and al-FuQuk. Qunawi passed away in 672/1273 (the year in which both Rumi and Khwajah Nasir al-Din died) or in 673/1274.

7. Mawlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi Rumi:

Known in the East as Mawlawi and in the West as Rumi, author of the world famous Mathnawi, this man is one of the greatest geniuses the world and Islamic 'irfan have ever seen. He was descended from Abu Bakr. His Mathnawi is an ocean of wisdom and full of precise spiritual, social and mystic insights. He ranks amongst the foremost Persian poets.

Originally from Balkh, he left it with his father when still a child. Together they visited Makkah, and at Nishabur they met with Shaykh Farid al-Din al-'Attar. On leaving Makkah his father went to Qunyah and there they settled down. At first Rumi, being a scholar, engaged himself, like the other scholars of his rank, in teaching, and he lived a respectable life. Then he met the famous mystic Shams-e Tabrizi. Rumi was magnetized by this man and at once gave everything up. His diwan of ghazal is named after Shams, and he has repeatedly made ardent mention of him in his Mathnawi. Rumi passed away in 672/1273.

8. Fakhr al-Din al-'Iraqi al-Hamadani:

A well-known poet of ghazal and a mystic, he was a pupil of Sadr al-Din Qunawi and a murid and protege of Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi. He passed-away in 688/1289.

'Urafa' of the Eighth/Fourteenth Century:

1. 'Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani:

He began as a secretarial official; then he gave up his post to enter the path of the 'urafa', giving up all his wealth in the way of God. He wrote many books, and held special beliefs in the field of theoretical 'irfan, which are discussed in several important texts of 'irfan. He passed away in 736/1335. Amongst his disciples was the well-known poet Khwajawi Kirmani, who describes him thus:

> Whoever flourishes upon the path of 'Ali,
> Like Khidr, finds the springs of life.
> Getting relief from the whisperings of the Devil,

He becomes like 'Ala ' al-Dawlah Simnani.

2. 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani:

Of the scholars of the eighth century 'irfan, 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani wrote commentaries on the Fusus of Ibn al- 'Arabi and the Manazil al-sa'irin of Khwajah 'Abd Allah. Both of these have been published and are referred to by scholars.

According to the author of Rawdat al-Jannat, in his account of Shaykh 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani was eulogized by al-Shahid al-Thani. He and 'Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani had heated discussions on theoretical issues of 'irfan that had been raised by Ibn al-'Arabi. He passed away in the year 735/1334.

3. Khwajah Hafiz Shirazi:

Despite his world-wide fame, the details of Hafiz's life are not altogether clear. What is known is that he was a scholar, an 'arif, a hafiz of the Quran and an exegete of the Book. He himself has repeatedly indicated this in his verses:

> I haven 't seen more beautiful lines than yours, Hafiz,
> By the Quran that you have in your breast.
> Your love shall cry out if you, like Hafiz,
> Recite the Quran memoriter with all the fourteen readings.
> Of the memorizers of the world none like me has gathered,
> Subtleties of wisdom with Quranic delicacies.

In his poetry Hafiz speaks much of the pir-e tariqat (spiritual guide) and of the murshid (master), yet it is not clear who was the teacher and guide of Hafiz himself.

Hafiz's poetry attains to lofty mystical heights, and there are few people who are able to perceive his mystic subtleties. All the 'urafa' who came after him admit that he had indeed practically covered the lofty stages of 'irfan. Several important scholars have written commentaries on some of his verses. For example, a treatise was written by the well-known philosopher of the ninth century, Muhaqqiq Jalal al-Din Dawwani, on the following verse:

> My teachersaid: the pen of creation was subject to no error,
> Bravo the pure eyes that hide all defects.

Hafiz passed away in 791/1389.[17]

4. Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari:

He is the creator of the sublime mystic poem Gulshan-e raz (The Garden of Secrets). This poem is counted as one of the loftiest works of 'irfan, and has immortalized the name of its author. Many commentaries have been written upon it, perhaps the best of which is that written by Shaykh Muhammad Lahiji, which has been published and is available. Shabistari passed away about the year 720/1320.

5. Sayyid Haydar Amuli:

One of the erudite mystics, Sayyid Haydar Amuli is the author of the book Jami' al-'asrar (Collector of the Secrets), which is a precise work on the theoretical 'irfan of Ibn al-'Arabi. This book has lately been published. Another book by him is Nass al-nusus, which is a commentary on Ibn al-'Arabi's Fusus al-hikam.

He was a contemporary of the famous jurisprudent Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin al-Hilli, but the date of his death is not known.

6. 'Abd al-Karim Jilani:

He is the author of the well-known book al-'Insan al-kamil ('The Perfect Man'). The concept of the perfect man is a subject first raised in its theoretical form by Ibn al-'Arabi, and has ever since occupied an important place in Islamic 'irfan. Ibn al-'Arabi's pupil and disciple, Sadr al-Din Qunawi, has discussed it fully in his Miftah al-ghayb and, as far as we know, at least two mystics have written whole books on the subject. One is 'Aziz al-Din Nasafi, a mystic of the latter half of the 7th/13th century, the other being 'Abd al-Karim Jilani. Jilani passed away in 805/1402 at the age of thirty- eight.

'Urafa' of the Ninth/Fifteenth Century

1. Shah Ni'mat Allah Wali:

He claimed descent from the house of 'Ali. He is amongst the most famous of 'urafa' and sufis. The current Ni'mat- ullahi order is one of the most famous of sufi orders. His grave near the city of Kirman is still a sufi shrine.

It is said that he lived until the age of ninety-five, and died in the year 820/1417, 827/1424 or 834/1430. He lived most of his life in the seventh century and associated with Hafiz Shirazi. Much of his mystical poetry has survived.

2. Sa'in al-Din 'Ali Tarakeh Isfahani:

He is one of the most erudite of 'urafa'. He was deeply acquainted with the theoretical 'irfan of

Ibn al-'Arabi. His book Tamhid al-qawa'id, which has been published and is available, is a tribute to his profound learning in 'irfan, and has been used as a source by the scholars who have succeeded him.

3. Muhammad ibn Mamzah al-Fanari al-Rumi:

One of the scholars of the 'Uthmani empire, he distinguished himself in several fields. Author of many books, his fame in 'irfan is due to his book Misbah al-'uns. This is a commentary on Qunawi's Miftah al-ghayb. Although it is not every- one who can write a commentary and exposition on the books of Ibn al-'Arabi and his disciple Sadr al-Din Qunawi, the authorities in 'irfan to have followed him have all confirmed the value of this work. A lithograph print of this book with the hawashi of Aqa Mirza Hashim Rashti, a mystic of the last century, has been published from Tehran.

Unfortunately due to bad print parts of the hawashi are unreadable.

4. Shams al-Din Muhammad Lahiji Nurbakhshi:

The author of a commentary on the Gulshan-e raz of Mahmud Shabistari, and a contemporary of Mir Sadr al-Din Dashtaki and 'Allamah Dawwani, he lived in Shiraz. These two, who were both outstanding philosophers of their age and, according to what Qadi Nur Allah Shushtari has written in his Majalis al-mu'minin, both accorded Lahiji the greatest respect.

Lahiji was the disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh, himself the pupil of Ibn Fahd al-Hilli. In his commentary on the Gulshan-e raz he traces his chain back from Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh to Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, thence to al-'Imam al-Rida and the preceding Imams and thus to the Holy Prophet himself (S). This he calls the 'Golden Chain' (silsilat al-dhahab).

His fame rests largely on his commentary on the Gulshan-e raz, a commentary that itself is one of the loftiest of mystic texts. He began his writings, according to what he himself relates in the introduction to his commentary, in the year 877/1472. The year of his death is not precisely known. It seems to have been before 900/1494.

5. Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami:

Jami claimed descent from the well- known jurisprudent of the second century, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani. A powerful poet, he is considered the last great mystic poet of the Persian language.

At first he assumed the takhallus "Dashti", but since he was born in the locality of Jam, in the vicinity of Mashhad, and traced his spiritual descent to Ahmad Jami (Zhand-e Pil), he

changed this to Jami. In his own words:

> My birthplace is Jam and the drops of my pen
> Are the draught of the cup of Shaykh al-Islam,[18]
> Thus in the pages of my poetry
> In two ways my pen-name is Jami.

Jami was an accomplished scholar in the various fields of Arabic grammar and syntax, law, jurisprudence, logic, philosophy and 'irfan. His many books include a commentary on the Fusus al-hikam of Ibn al- 'Arabi, a commentary on the Luma'at of Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi, a commentary on the Ta'iyyah of Ibn al-Farid, a commentary on the Qasidat al-Burdah in praise of the Holy Prophet (S), a commentary on the Qasidah Mimiyyah of Farazdaq in praise of al-'Imam 'Ali ibn al- Husayn, a book entitled al-Lawdyih, his Bahdristan, written in the style of Sa'di's Gulistans and a book Nafahat al-'uns on the biographies of mystics.

Jami was the disciple of Baha' al-Din Naqshaband, the founder of the Naqshabandi order. However, as in the instance of Muhammad Lahiji, who was a disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh, his academic standing is above that of his peer. Jami, even though he is counted as one of the followers of Baha' al-Din Naqshaband, achieved an academic standing several degrees higher than that of Baha' al-Din.

Thus in this brief history in which we are concentrating upon the academic side of 'irfan and not upon the development of the various orders, special mention has been made of Muhammad Lahiji and 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, rather than of the founders of their orders. Jami died in 898/1492 at the age of 81.

This ends our brief history of 'irfan, covering the period from its beginnings until the close of the 9th/15th century. We chose to end at this point because, in our view, from the 10th/16th century onwards 'irfan took on a different form. Up until this time the learned and academic figures of 'irfan had all been members of regular sufi orders and the poles (aqtab) or masters of the sufi orders were great academic figures of 'irfan, to whom we owe the great mystic works. Around the beginning of the 10th/16th century, however, this began to change.

Firstly, the masters of the sufi orders were no longer possessed of the academic prominence of their forerunners. It may be said that from this time onwards formal sufism lost itself in customs, outward aspects, occasionally of an innovative nature (bid'ah).

Secondly, scholars who were not members of any formal sufi order began to show profound learning in the theoretical 'irfan of Ibn al-'Arabi, such that none from amongst the sufi orders could match them. Examples of such scholars are Sadr al-Muta'allihin of Shiraz (d. 1050/1640), his pupil Fayd Kashani (d. 1091/1680), and Fayd's own pupil Qadi Sa'id Qummi (d. 1103/1691). The knowledge of each of these of the theoretical 'irfan of Ibn al-'Arabi

exceeded that of the poles or masters of any sufi order of their times, while they themselves were not attached to any of the sufi orders. Moreover, this is a development that has continued down to the present day, as can be seen in the examples of the late Aqa-Muhammad Rida Qumsheh'i and the late Aqa Mirza Hashim Rashti. These two scholars of the last hundred years were both experts in the field of theoretical 'irfan, yet they too were not members of any sufi order.

On the whole, it can be said that it was from the time of Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, who laid the foundations of theoretical 'irfan and philosophized 'irfan, that the seed of this new development was sown.

The above-mentioned Muhammad ibn Hamzah Fanari perhaps represented this type. But the new development that produced experts in the field of theoretical 'irfan who were either not at all devoted to practical 'irfan and its spiritual methodology, or, if they were - and to some extent most of them were - had nothing to do with any formal sufi order, is perfectly discernible from the 10th/16th century onwards.

Thirdly, since the 10th/16th century there have been individuals and groups devoted to the spiritual methodology of practical 'irfan, who had attained a very lofty spiritual standing indeed and yet they were not members of any of the formal sufi orders. They were either indifferent to the formal sufis or regarded them as being partially or totally heretical.

Amongst the characteristics of this new group of theoretical and practical 'urafa' - who were also learned in law and jurisprudence - was a perfect loyalty to the shari'ah and a harmony between the rites of the path of progression and the rites of jurisprudence. This development has also its own history, but here we have no opportunity to enter its details.

The Mystic's Stations (Maqamat):

The 'urafa' maintain that in order to arrive at the stage of true gnosis, there are stages and stations that must be covered. Unless covered, the 'urafa' hold, to arrive at the station of true gnosis is impossible.

'Irfan has a facet that it shares with theosophy (hikmat ilahi), while many of the facets of these two disciplines differ. The facet common to them both is that the aim of both is knowledge of God (ma'rifat Allah). They differ in that theosophy does not aim solely at knowledge of God but rather aims at a knowledge of the order of being.

The knowledge that is sought by the theosophist (hakim) is of the system of existence, of which, naturally, knowledge of God is an important pillar. The goal of 'irfan, on the other hand, is exclusively knowledge of God.

In the view of 'irfan, knowledge of God is total knowledge. Everything must be known in the light of knowledge of God and from the point of view of tawhid; such knowledge is a derivative of knowledge of God.

Secondly, the knowledge sought by the hakim is intellectual knowledge and can be likened to the knowledge acquired by the mathematician after thought and reflection on a particular mathematical problem. However, the knowledge sought by the 'arif is experienced and witnessed; it can be likened to the knowledge acquired by an experimental scientist in his laboratory. The hakim seeks certain knowledge ('ilm al-yaqin), while the 'arif seeks the certainty of direct vision ('ayn al-yaqin).

Thirdly, the means employed by the hakim are his reason, deductions and proofs, whereas those employed by the 'arif are the heart and the purification, disciplining and perfecting of the self. The hakim seeks, through the telescope of his mind, to study the order of existence, while the 'arif seeks to prepare the whole of his being so as to arrive at the core of reality. He seeks to reach reality like a drop of water in the search of the sea. In the view of the hakim, the perfection expected of a human being lies in understanding reality, while in the 'arif's view it lies in reaching reality. In the hakim's view an imperfect human being is one who is ignorant, while in the 'arif's view the imperfect human is one who has remained distant and separated from his origin.

The 'arif therefore sees perfection in reaching rather than in understanding. And in order to reach the principal goal and the stage of true gnosis, he views the traversing of several stages and stations as being necessary and essential. This he calls sayr wa suluk, the science of inward wayfaring.

These stages and stations have been discussed in great detail in the books of 'irfan. Here it is not possible to explain, even briefly, each and every one of them. However, in order at least to give a general impression, I believe that we can do no better than to turn to the ninth section of Ibn Sina's al-'Isharat. Although Ibn Sina is mainly a philosopher, not a mystic, he is not a 'dry' philosopher, and especially towards the end of his life he developed mystic inclinations. In his al-'Isharat, which appears to be his last work, he has devoted a whole section to the 'stations' of the gnostics. This section being extraordinarily sublime and beautiful, we consider it more suitable for our purposes to present a summary of this section, rather than citing or translating suitable passages from the books of the 'urafa'.

Zahid, 'abid & 'arif:

He who abstains from the enjoyments of the world, even its wholesome ones, is called a zahid (ascetic); and he who is careful to perform worship, prayer and fasting and the like, is called an 'abid (devotee); and he who keeps his thought turned perpetually towards the realm of light in order that the light of the Real shine in his breast is called an 'arif; and sometimes two or

more of these epithets may apply to the same person.

Although Ibn Sina defines here the zahid, the 'abid and the 'arif, yet at the same time he is defining zuhd, 'ibadah, and 'irfan. This is because a definition of zahid, 'abid, or tarif per se includes implicitly a definition of zuhd, 'ibadah, or 'irfan. Thus the conclusion to be drawn from this passage is that zuhd is abstinence from worldly enjoyments; 'ibadah is the performance of specific acts like prayer, fasting, reciting the Quran and the like; and 'irfan is turning away the mind from everything but Allah and paying complete attention to the Divine Essence so that the light of the Real may shine on one's heart.

The last clause indicates an important point. One or more of these characteristics may occur in combination. Thus it is possible for an individual to be an 'abid and a zahid, a zahid and an 'arif, an 'abid and an 'arif, or an 'abid, zahid, and 'arif at one and the same time. Ibn Sina has not elaborated this, but he implies that although it is possible for one to be a zahid or an 'abid and not be an 'arif, it is not possible for one to be an 'arif and not be a zahid and an 'abid. One may be both a zahid and an 'abid without being an 'arif, but an 'arif by definition is also a zahid and an 'abid. So, although not every zahid or 'abid is an 'arif, every 'arif is a zahid and an 'abid.

In the next passage we will see that the zuhd of an 'arif differs in its goal from that of a non-'arif. In fact, the spirit and essence of the 'arif's zuhd and 'ibadah are different from those of the non-'arif:

The zuhd for the non-'arif, is a transaction by which he gives up the pleasures of the world for the pleasures of the Hereafter, whereas for the 'arif it is something through which he dissociates himself from everything that keeps him from attention towards God and he looks down on everything except God. Whereas worship for the non-'arif is a transaction by which he performs actions in the world for a reward (ajr, thawab) to be received in the Hereafter, for the 'arif it is a kind of exercise that is aimed at strengthening his self's intellectual and imaginative faculties, and which, by repetition, draws away the self from the realm of illusion to the realm of the Real.

The 'arif's Goal:

The 'arif desires the Real (God) not for the sake of something else, and he values nothing above his knowledge of the Real, and his worship of Him is because He is worthy of worship and it is a worthy way of relating himself to Him; it is not out of desire (for rewards) or fear (of chastisement).

The meaning of this is that in terms of his aims the 'arif is a muwahhid. He seeks only God, yet his desire of God is not on account of His gifts in this world or in the Hereafter. Were such to be the case, the real object of his desire would be the gifts, God being only the

preliminary means by which the desired gifts are sought. In such a case, in reality, the final object of worship and desire would be one's own self; for the purpose of seeking those gifts is the pleasure of the self.

However, the 'arif desires whatever he desires for the sake of God. When he desires the gifts of God he does so because they are from Him, and are His favours. They represent His Grace and Magnanimity. So, while the non-'arif seeks God for the sake of His gifts, the 'arif seeks the gifts of God for the sake of God.

Here the question may arise, if the 'arif does not seek God for the sake of anything, then why does he worship Him? Is it not true that every act of worship must have a purpose? Ibn Sina's passage contains the answer. He states that the goal and motivation of the 'arif's worship is one of two things. One is the inherent worthiness of the Worshipped to be worshipped, meaning that one worships God simply because He is worthy of worship. It is rather like someone who upon noticing some admirable qualities in a person or a thing praises that person or thing. If asked what motivated him to utter such praise, or of what benefit was it to him, he will reply that he sought no benefit from his praise, but simply saw that person or thing as being genuinely deserving of praise. This is true of the praise accorded to the heroes or the champions of each and every field.

The other motivation of the 'arif's worship is the worthiness of worship itself. It bears an intrinsic nobility and beauty of its own, for it is a connection, a tie, between oneself and God. Thus it has a worthiness of its own, and there is no reason why worship should necessarily entail desire or fear.

'Ali (A) has some famous words on this subject:

> My God, I do not worship You in fear of Your Fire, nor in desire for Your Paradise, but I find You worthy of worship so I worship You.

The 'urafa' place great importance on this issue, considering it a kind of shirk (polytheism) for one's goal in life and particularly in worship to be something other than God Himself. 'Irfan totally rejects this kind of shirk. Many have written elegantly and subtly on the subject, and we will look at an allegory from Sa'di's Bustan which takes the outward form of a story of Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznah and his close confidant Iyaz:

> One with the Shah of Ghaznah found fault, saying,
> What charm has he, the Shah's friend Iyaz.
> A flower indeed with neither colour nor smell,
> How strange of the nightingale to set its heart upon such a thing.
> Someone conveyed this remark to Sultan Mahmud,
> Who, on hearing it, was besides himself with anguish.

'I love him for his disposition and character,
Nor for his pleasing gait and stature. '
Heard I once that in a narrow defile,
The king's treasure-chest broke open after a camel fell.
The king, after signalling his bequest,
Spurred on his steed to get ahead hastily.
The riders now fell upon the pearls and corals,
Their thoughts now turning from the king to the treasure.
None of the proud lads remained that day
To follow in the king's train except Iyaz
Looking out, the king saw him, and beholding Iyaz,
His face like a flower bloomed with delight.
'What booty have you brought along, ' the king inquired.
'None, 'said, Iyaz. 'I hurried after you,
Preferring your service to treasure and bounties.

Sa'di then turns from this story to the point he wishes to make, which he expresses thus:

If you look to your friend for his favours,
You are tied to yourself not to your friend
A breach of the Way it was if the saints
Desired of God aught other than God.

The First Station

The first level of the 'arif's journey is what they eall 'resolution' (al-'iradah), and this is a fervent desire to catch hold of the Firm Tie (al-'urwat al-wuthqa) that catches hold of one who is perceptive of true proofs, or who has settled his self through the covenant of faith, so that it impels his heart towards the Holy in order to attain the spirit of connection (with Him).

In order to explain the first stage of the spiritual path - which in one respect potentially embraces the whole of 'irfan - we are obliged to be somewhat elaborate. The 'urafa' primarily believe in a principle which they sum up in the following phrase:

The ends are the return to the beginnings.

Clearly, for the end to be the beginning there are two possibilities.

One is that the movement is in a straight line, and that once the object in motion reaches a certain point it changes its direction and retraces exactly the same route that it came. In philosophy it has been proved that such a change of direction would entail an interval of motionlessness, even if imperceptible. Furthermore, these two movements would be opposite

to each other. The second possibility is that the movement is on along a curve all of whose points are equidistant from a certain central point, in other words a circle. It is clear that if the movement takes the form of a circle, naturally the path will end at the point of commencement.

An object moving in a circle will continually move farther from the point of beginning until it reaches the point farthest from where it began. This is the point diametrically opposite to the point of commencement. It is also from this point that, with no pause or interval, the return journey (ma'ad) to the point of departure (mabda') commences. The 'urafa' call the first part of the journey, i.e. from the point of departure to the point farthest from it, 'the arc of descent' (qaws al-nazul), and the journey from there back to the point of departure, 'the arc of ascent' (qaws al-su'ud). There is a philosophical view associated with the movement of things from the point of departure to the farthest point which the philosophers call the 'principle of causality' (asl al-'illiyyah), and which the 'urafa' call the 'principle of emanation' (asl al-tajalli); in either case objects travelling along the arc of descent are as if driven from behind. Similarly, the movement of objects from the farthest point to the point of departure also has its own philosophical theory. This is the principle of every derivative being's desire and passion to return to its origin. In other words, it is the principle of the flight back of everything estranged and stranded to its origin and homeland. This tendency, so the 'urafa' believe, is inherent in each and every particle of existence, including the human being, though in man it can often be latent and hidden.

Man's preoccupations prevent the activity of this tendency, and a series of stimuli are required before this inner inclination will surface. It is the appearance and surfacing of this inclination that the 'urafa' term as 'resolution' or 'will' (iradah).

Thus in reality this resolution is a type of awakening of a dormant consciousness. 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, in his Istilahat, defines iradah as:

> A spark in the heart from the fire of love that compels one to answer the summons of the Real (Haqiqah).

Khwajah 'Abd Allah Ansari in his Manazil al-sa'irin defines iradah as follows:

> It is the voluntary answer (in actions) to the summons of the Real (Haqiqah).

Here it is necessary to point out that the meaning of iradah being the first stage is that it is the first stage after a chain of other stages has been passed, stages that are called 'preparations' (bidayat), 'doors' (abwab), 'conduct' (mu'amalat). and 'manners' (akhlaq). Thus iradah is the first stage in the terminology of the 'urafa' in the sense that it signifies a genuine gnostic awakening.

Rumi describes the principle that 'the end is the return to the beginning' as follows:

> The parts are faced towards the Whole,
> Nightingales are in love with the rose's face;
> Whatever comes from the sea to the sea returns,
> And everything goes back to its source;
> Like the streams rushing down from mountain tops,
> My soul, burning with love, longs to leave the body.

Rumi opens his Mathnawi by inviting the reader to listen to the plaintive cries of the reed, as it complains of its separation from the reed bed. Thus in the first lines of his Mathnawi Rumi is actually bringing up the first stage of the 'arif, that is iradah, a desire to return to one's origins that is accompanied with the feeling of separation and loneliness. Rumi says:

> Listen to the reed as its story it relates
> And of its separation it complains.
> Since the time that from the reed bed was I taken,
> At my strains have lamented man and woman.
> O, a heart I seek that is torn with the pain of separation
> That it may hear the tale of my longing for return.
> Whoever remains distant from his origins,
> Seeks again the life of reunion.

To sum up, Ibn Sina, in the above passage, means that iradah is a desire and longing that, after deep feelings of alienation, loneliness and estrangement, makes its appearance in the human being and motivates him to seek reunion with the Real, a union which puts an end to the feelings of alienation, loneliness, and helplessness.

Exercise and Self-Discipline:

Then what is certainly required is exercise (riyadah), and it is directed towards three ends - the first is to clear the path of all but the Real; the second is to subjugate the 'commanding self' (al-nafs al-'ammarah) to the 'contented self' (al-nafs al-mutma'innah); the third is to render the heart subtle for awareness.

After having commenced the journey at the stage of iradah, the next stage is that of exercise and preparedness. This preparedness is termed riyadah. Nowadays this term is generally misunderstood and it is taken to mean self-mortification. In some religions the principle of mortifying the self is hallowed. Perhaps the best examples of this are to be seen in the Yogis of India. In the terminology of Ibn Sina, however, the word is not used in this sense. The original meaning of this Arabic word is 'to exercise', or 'to break in a colt.' Thereafter the word was used for physical exercise, a sense which the word still bears today. The 'urafa'

borrowed this word, and in their terminology it is used to mean exercising the soul and preparing it for the illumination of the light of knowledge (ma'rifah). It is in this sense that the word is used in the passage above.

Ibn Sina then declares this exercising and preparing of the soul to be directed towards three aims. The first of these is related to external matters and entails the removal of distractive occupations and the causes of negligence (ghaflah). The second is related to the balance of the inner forces and the removal of agitations from the soul, which he has described as the submission of the 'commanding self' to the 'contented self'. The third relates to qualitative changes in the soul, which he calls 'rending subtle of the heart'.

And the first [of the three aims of riyadah] is aided by true zuhd (i.e. zuhd removes the impediments and the hindering preoccupations, which cause neglect, from the path). The second is aided by several things: worship infused with (presence of heart, concentration and) reflection; melody that serves to strengthen the self through which the accompanying words have an effect on the heart (such as melodious reciting of the Quran, supplications and litanies, and the singing of mystic poetry); the instructive speech of a pure, eloquent speaker who speaks gently and effectively in the manner of a guide. As for the third goal, it is aided by subtle thoughts (contemplating subtle and delicate ideas and meanings which lead to spiritual refinement) and a chaste love (a love that is spiritual and not physical and sensual) which is directed by the virtues of the beloved and not ruled over by sensuality.

Then, when iradah and riyadah reach a certain degree, flashes (khalasat) of the dawning light of the Real will descend upon him, delightful as they are, they are momentary like flashes of lightning appearing and instantly vanishing. These they call 'moments' (awqat), and these flashes increase in frequency with greater diligence in riyadah.

As he advances deeper into this, they descend upon him even when he is not exercising. Now often he will glance at something and his glance be deflected from it towards the Holy, bringing to his attention some aspect of the Divine, and a state of trance (ghashyah) descends upon him, in which, as if, he sees God in every thing.

Perhaps it is at this stage that his states overwhelm him, disturbing his equanimity, a change that would be noticed by anyone near him.

Then, he reaches a point in his exercises when his 'moments' change into stable tranquillity, the brief snatches become familiar and the flashes beeome a prolonged blaze. Then he achieves an enduring gnostic state which permanently accompanies him from which he derives an ecstatic delight. And when it departs him he becomes sad and bewildered.

And perhaps it is at this stage the state in which he is in will make itself apparent (to others); but as he progresses deeper into this gnosis, its appearance will be less detectable in him and

he will be absent when (appearing to be) present, and travelling when (appearing to be) still.

This passage calls to mind a sentence spoken by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) to his disciple Kumayl ibn Ziyad about the 'friends of God' (awliya' al-Haqq), who exist in every age:

> Knowledge has led them to the reality of insight, and they are in contact with the spirit of certainty. They find easy what is regarded as rough by those who live in comfort and luxury. They are intimate with what terrifies the ignorant. They are in the company of people with their bodies, yet their souls are lodged in the highest realm. (Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. 147).

Until this stage, perhaps, this state of gnosis will occur to him only occasionally. Thereafter it will gradually become such that it is available to him whenever he wants.

Thereafter, he advances further than even this stage until his affair no longer depends on his own wish. Whenever he observes a thing he sees other than it (i.e God), even if his observation is not for the sake of reflection. So, the opportunity presents itself to ascend from the plane of false appearances to the plane of Truth. He becomes stabilized upon it, while (in the world) he is surrounded by the heedless.

Up until this point we have been dealing with the stage of exercise, self-discipline, struggle and the spiritual itinerary. Now the 'arif has reached his goal.

When he crosses from the stage of riyadah to that of attainment, his inward becomes like a clear mirror facing in the direction of the Real. Sublime delights shower upon him, and he rejoices at his self for what is there of the Real. Now (like one viewing an image in a mirror, who looks either at the image or at the mirror reflecting the image) he is perplexed by two views: the view of the Real and the view of his own self.

Then, he becomes oblivious to his own self and views only the Holy. And if he notices his self it is for the reason of its being the viewer, not for the sake of its own beauty (like one who when looking at an image in a mirror, views the image only; although he does not pay attention to the mirror itself, nevertheless the mirror is seen while viewing the image, though the mirror is not viewed for its own beauty). It is at this point that the wayfarer attains union (and his journey from khalq to Haqq becomes complete).

Here ends our summary of the ninth section of Ibn Sina's Isharat and his account of the journey from creation (khalq) to God (Haqq). A point that must be added is that the 'urafa' believe in four journeys: sayr min al-khalq ila al-Haqq, sayr bi al-Haqq a al-Haqq, sayr min al-Haqq ila al-khalq bi al-Haqq, sayr fi al-khalq bi al-Haqq (the journey from creation to God; the journey with God in God; the journey with God from God to creation; and finally, the journey in creation with God).

The first journey is from creatures to the Creator. The second is in the Creator; it means that in the course of it the 'arif becomes acquainted with His Qualities and Names and himself becomes adorned with the same. In the third journey, he returns towards the creation, without becoming separated from God, in order to guide the people. The fourth journey is amongst the people while still united with God. In this journey the 'arif is with and amongst the people and seeks to guide their affairs so as to lead them towards God.

The summary from Ibn Sina's al-'Isharat given above is related to the first of these journeys. He also gives a brief account of the second journey, but it is not necessary for our purposes to include it. Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, in his commentary on al-'Isharat, says that Ibn Sina has explained the first journey of the 'arif in nine stages. Three stages are related to the beginning of the journey, three to the journey from its beginning to its end, and three are related to the arrival or the union. Some reflection on Ibn Sina's account makes the point clear.

By 'riyadah ' which is translated as 'exercise', Ibn Sina means the exercises in self-discipline that the 'arif undergoes. There are many of these, and the 'arif must follow a chain of stations in these exercises too. Here Ibn Sina is brief in the extreme, yet the 'urafa' have discussed this matter in detail, and one may seek these details in their works.

Some Terms of 'Irfan:

In this section we intend to cover some of the special terms used in 'irfan. The 'urafa' have coined a large number of these terms, and without an acquaintance with them it is not possible to understand many of their ideas. In fact, one may draw a conclusion quite opposite to that intended. This is one of the characteristics of 'irfan. However, every branch of learning has its own set of terms, and this is a matter of necessity. The commonly understood meanings of words used are often unable to meet the precise requirements of a science or discipline.

Thus there is no option but that in every discipline certain words be selected to convey certain specific meanings, thus coining for the practitioners of that discipline a special vocabulary. 'Irfan, too, is no exception to this general rule.

Moreover, the 'urafa' insist that none but those initiated to the Path should know their ideas, because - in their view at least - none but the 'urafa' are able to understand these concepts. Thus the 'urafa' unlike the masters of other sciences and crafts, intentionally attempt to keep their meanings concealed so that the vocabulary they devised bears, in addition to the usual aspects of a terminology, also something of an enigmatic aspect, leaving us to discover the enigma's secret.

Furthermore, there is also a third aspect to be occasionally taken into account, which

increases the difficulty. This arises from the practice of some 'urafa' - at least those called the Malamatiyyah - who adopted an inverted form of ostentation (riya' ma'kus) in their discourses by cultivating ill fame instead of good name and fame amongst the people. This means that as opposed to those afflicted with the vice of ostentation (riya') who wish to make themselves appear better than they actually are, the 'urafa' practising self-reproach seek to be considered good by God and yet appear to the people as bad. In this way they seek to cure themselves of all types of ostentation and egoism.

It is said that the majority of the 'urafa' of Khurasan were Malamatiyyah. Some even believe that Hafiz was one. Such words as rindi (libertinism), la ubaligari (carelessness); qalandari (mendicancy), qallashi (pauperism) and the like signify indifference to creation, not to the Creator. Hafiz has spoken a lot on the subject of giving the impression of doing things that earn for one a bad name, while being inwardly good and righteous. A few examples:

> If an adherent of the path of love, worry not about bad name.
> The Shaykh-e San'an had his robe in pawn at a gambling house.
> Even if I mind the reproaches of claimants,
> My drunken libertinism would leave me not.
> The asceticism of raw libertines is like a village path,
> But what good would the thought of reform do to one of worldwide ill fame like me?
> Through love of wine I brought my self-image to naught,
> In order to destroy the imprint of self-devotion.
> How happily passes the time of a mendicant, who in his spiritual journey,
> Keeps reciting the Name of the Lord, while playing with the beads of his pagan rosary.

However, Hafiz, elsewhere condemns the ostentatious cultivation of ill fame just as he condemns sanctimoniousness:

> My heart, let me guide thee to the path of salvation:
> Neither boast of your profligacy, nor publicize your piety.

Rumi defends the Malamatiyyah in the following verses:

> Behold, do not despise those of bad name,
> Attention must be given to their secrets.
> How often gold has been painted black,
> For the fear of being stolen and lost.

This issue is one of those over which the fuqaha' have found fault with the 'urafa'. Just as Islamic law condemns sanctimony (riya') - considering it a form of shirk - so does it condemn

this seeking of reproach. It says that a believer has no right to compromise his social standing and honour. Many 'urafa' also condemn this practice.

In any case, this practice, which has been common amongst some 'urafa', led them to wrap their ideas in words which conveyed the very opposite of what they meant. Naturally this makes the understanding of their intentions a good deal harder.

Abu al-Qasim Qushayri, one of the leading figures of 'irfan, declares in his Risalah that the 'urafa' intentionally speak in enigmas, for they do not want the uninitiated to become aware of their customs, states and their aims. This, he tells us, is because they are incapable of being understood by the uninitiated.[19]

The technical terms of 'irfan are many. Some of them are related to theoretical 'irfan, that is to say, to the mystic world-view and its ontology. These terms resemble the terms of philosophy and are relatively recent. The father of all or most of them was Ibn al-'Arabi. It is extremely difficult to understand them. Amongst these are fayd al- 'aqdas (the holiest grace), fayd al-muqaddas (the holy grace), al-wujud al-munbasit (the extending existence), haqq makhluq bi hadarat al- khams, maqam al-'ahadiyyah (the station of uniqueness), maqam al- wahidiyyah (the station of oneness), and so on.

The others are related to practical 'irfan, i.e. the sayr wa suluk of 'irfan. These terms, being of necessity related to the human being, are similar to the concepts of psychology and ethics. In fact they are part of a special type of psychology, a psychology that is indeed empirical and experimental. According to the 'urafa', philosophers - and for that matter psychologists, theologians and sociologists, let alone another class of scholars - who have not entered this valley to observe and study the self at close hand, have no right to make judgements on this subject.

The terms of practical 'irfan, as opposed to those of theoretical 'irfan, are ancient. They can be dated as early as the 3rd/9th century, from the time of Dhu al-Nun, Ba Yazid and Junayd. Here follows an exposition of some of these terms, according to definitions ascribed to them by Qushayri and others.

1. Waqt (Moment):

In the previous section we came across this word in a passage from Ibn Sina. Now let us turn to the 'urafa's definitions of it. The summary of what Qushayri has to say on this subject is that the concept of waqt is relative. Each state or condition that befalls the 'arif requires of him a special behavioural response. The particular state which calls for a particular kind of behaviour is termed the Moment of a particular 'arif.

Of course, another 'arif in the same state may have a different Moment, or the same 'arif in

other circumstances may have a different Moment that will require of him a different behaviour and a different responsibility.

An 'arif must be familiar with these Moments; that is, he must recognize each state that descends upon him from the unseen, as well as the responsibilities which accompany it. The 'arif must also count his Moment as precious. Thus it is said that "the 'arif is the son of the Moment". Rumi says:

> The sufi is to be the son of the Moment, O friend;
> Saying 'tomorrow ' is not a convention of the Way.

The Arabic waqt has the same sense as dam (breath) and 'aysh-e naqd (cash of life or cash pleasure) of Persian poetry. Hafiz especially makes much mention of 'the cash of life' and 'counting the moment as precious.' Some of those who are either uninformed or who wish to exploit Hafiz as an excuse for their own perverseness, suppose or pretend that Hafiz's use of such words is an invitation to material pleasures and indifference to the cares of the future, to the Hereafter and God - an attitude which is known in the West as Epicureanism.

The notions of 'counting the moment as precious' or 'ready pleasure' is of the recurring motifs of Hafiz's poetry. Perhaps he mentions it thirty times or more. It is obvious that since in his poetry Hafiz observes the 'urafa's practice of speaking in enigmas and symbols, many of his ambiguous verses may appear, on the surface, to present perverse ideas. In order to clear away any such delusions, one may count the following verses as throwing light on others like them.

> Whether I drink wine or not, what have I to do with anyone?
> I am the guard of my secrets and gnostic of my moment.
> Get up, let's take the sufi's cloak to the tavern,
> And the theopathetic ravings to the bazaar of nonsense;
> Let's be ashamed of these polluted woolens,
> If the name of miracle be given to this virtue and skill;
> If the heart fails to value the moment and does nothing,
> Now much shame will the moments bring in for us.
> In a land, at morning time, a wayfarer
> Said this to a companion on the way,
> O sufi, the wine becomes pure
> When it remains in its bottle for forty days.
> God is disdainful of that woolen cloak a hundred times
> That has a hundred idols up its sleeve;
> I see not the joy of 'aysh in anyone,
> Nor the cure of a heart nor care for religion;
> The inners have become gloomy, perhaps perchance,

A lamp may be kindled by some recluse.
Neither the memorizer is alone (with God) during lessons,
Nor the scholar enjoys any knowledge of certainty.

Hafiz's ambiguous verses on this subject are many. For example:

Grab the pleasure of the moment, for Adam did not tarry
More than a moment in the garden of Paradise.

Qushayri states that what is meant by the sufi being the 'son of his Moment' is that he performs whatever has upmost priority for him in the 'state' (hal) he is in; and what is meant by 'the Moment is a sharp sword' is that the requirement (hukm) of each Moment is cutting and decisive; to fail to meet it is fatal.

2 & 3. Hal (State) and Maqam (Position):

Well-known amongst the terms of 'irfan are hal (state) and maqam (position). The State is that which descends upon the 'arif's heart regardless of his will, while his Position is that which he earns and attains through his efforts. The State quickly passes but the Position is lasting. It is said that the States are like flashes of lightning that quickly vanish. Hafiz says:

A lightning flash from Layla's house at dawn,
Goodness knows, what it did to the love-torn heart of Majnun.

And Sa'di says:

Someone asked of he who had lost his son,
O enlightened soul, O wise old man,
All the way from Egypt you smelt his shirt,
Why could you not see him in the well of Canaan.
Said he, my State is like a lightning flash,
A moment it's there, another moment gone;
Often it lifts me to the highest sky,
And often I see not what is at my feet.
Should a dervish in his State persist,
The two worlds will lie in his hands.

Above we have already quoted the following sentence from the Nahj al-balaghah which is relevant here too:

He has revived his intellect and slain his self, until his (bodily and spiritual) bulkiness shrunk and his coarseness turned into tenderness. Then an effulgence,

> like brilliant flash of lightning, shone into his heart and illuminated the path before him.... (Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 220, p. 337)

The 'urafa' call these flashes lawa'ih, lawami' and tawali' depending upon their degree of intensity and length of duration.

4 & 5. Qabd (Contraction) and Bast (Expansion):

These two words are also amongst those to which the 'urafa' apply a special meaning, They refer to two contrasting spiritual states of the 'arif's soul; qabd (contraction) refers to a sense of desolation felt by it, while bast (expansion) is a state of expansion and joy. The 'urafa' have discussed these two states and their respective causes extensively.

6 & 7. Jam (Gatheredness) and Farq (Separation):

These two terms are much used by the 'urafa'. According to Qushayri: 'That which is on the part of the creature and acquired by the creature and worthy of the station of creaturehood is called farq; while that which is on the part of God- such as inspiration - is called jam'. He whom God makes halt at the station (maqam) of obedience and worship is at the station of farq; and he upon whom God reveals His favours is at the station of jam'.

Hafiz says:

> Listen to me with the ear of awareness and for pleasure strive,
> For these words came at dawn from the caller unseen;
> Stop thinking of 'separation ' that you become 'gathered'
> For, as a rule, the angel enters as soon as the Devil leaves.

8 & 9. Ghaybah (Absence) and Hudur (Presence):

Ghaybah is a state of unawareness of creation that occasionally descends upon the 'arif, in which he forgets himself and his surroundings. The 'arif becomes unaware of himself due to his presence (hudur) before God. In the words of a poet:

> I am not so occupied with you, O of heavenly face,
> For the memories of bygone selfhood still flash within my heart.

In this state of 'presence' with God and 'absence' from himself and his surroundings, it is possible that important occurrences take place around him without his becoming aware of them. In this connection the 'urafa' have many famous stories. Qushayri writes that Abu Hafs al-Haddad of Nishabur left his trade as a blacksmith because of one incident. Once as he was busy working in his shop, someone recited a verse of the Holy Quran. This put al-Haddad in a

state that rendered him totally heedless of his sensible surroundings. Without realizing it he removed a piece of red-hot iron from the furnace with his bare hand. His apprentice cried out to him and he returned to his senses. Thereupon he gave up that trade.

Qushayri also writes that al Shibli once came to see Junayd while Junayd's wife was also sitting there. Junayd's wife made a movement as if to leave, but Junayd stopped her saying that al-Shibli was in a 'state', and heedless of her. She sat a while. Junayd conversed with al-Shibli for some time until al Shibli slowly began to cry. Junayd then turned to his wife telling her to veil herself for al-Shibli was returning to his senses.

Hafiz says:

> As every report that I heard has led to perplexity,
> From now on it is me, the cupbearer, and the state of heedlessness.
> If it is presence you want do not be absent from Him, Hafiz
> When you meet what you desire, abandon the world and forget it.

It is along these lines that the 'urafa' explain the states of the awliya' during their prayers, in which they became totally heedless of themselves and of their surroundings. Later we shall see that there is a level higher than 'absence', and it was this that the awliya' were subject to.

10,11,12 & 13. Dhawq, Shurb, Sukr and Riyy:

The 'urafa' believe that mere conceptual knowledge of anything has no attraction; the attractiveness of a thing and the ability to inspire passion is subsequent to 'tasting'. At the end of the eighth section of his al-'Isharat Ibn Sina mentions this; he gives the example of a man who is impotent. He says that however much one may describe sexual pleasure to a person devoid of the sexual instinct, who has never had the taste of this pleasure, he will never be sexually aroused. Thus dhawq is the tasting of pleasure. In the terminology of 'irfan it means the actual perception of the pleasure derived from manifestations (tajalliyat) and revelations (mukashafat). Dhawq is the beginning of this, its continuance is called shurb (drinking), its joy sukr (intoxication) and being satiated with it riyy (thirst-quenching).

The 'urafa' are of the view that whatever is derived from dhawq is 'an appearance of intoxication' (tasakur) and not 'intoxication' (sukr) itself. Intoxication, they say, is obtained from 'drinking' (shurb). That which is obtained by 'becoming quenched' (riyy) is 'sobriety' (sahw), or the return to the senses.

It is in this sense that the 'urafa' have talked much about sharab and mey that would ordinarily mean wine.

14, 15 & 16. Mahw, Mahq, and Sahw:

In the 'urafa's discourses, the words mahw (effacement) and sahw (sobriety) are very common. What is meant by mahw is that the 'arif reaches such a stage that his ego becomes effaced in the Divine Essence.

He no more perceives his own ego as others do. And if this effacement reaches such a point that the effects of his ego are also effaced, they call this mahq (obliteration). Mahw and mahq are both higher than the stage of ghaybah, as indicated above. Mahw and mahq mean fana' (annihilation). Yet it is possible for an 'arif to return from the state of fana' to the state of baqa' (abiding in God). It does not however, mean a retrogression from a higher state; rather it means that the 'arif finds subsistence in God. This state, loftier even than mahw and mahq, is called sahw.

17. Khawatir (Thoughts):

The 'urafa' call the thoughts and inspirations cast into their hearts waridat (arrivals). These waridat are sometimes in the form of states of 'contraction' or 'expansion', joy or sadness, and sometimes in the form of words and speech. In the latter case they are called khawatir (sing. khatirah). It is as if someone inside him is speaking to the 'arif.

The 'urafa' have much to say on the subject of khawatir. They say that they can be rahmani (i. e. from God), shaytani (inspired by the Devil) or nafsani (musings of the self). The khawatir constitute one of the dangers of the path, for it is possible that due to some deviation or error the Devil may come to dominate the human being. In the words of the Quran:

> Verily the satans inspire their friends ... (6:121)

They say that the more adept should be able to discern whether the khatirah is from God or from the Devil. The fundamental criterion is to see what a particular khatirah commands or prohibits; if its command or prohibition is contrary to the dicta of the Shari'ah, then it is definitely satanic. The Quran says:

> Shall I inform you upon whom the Satans descend ? They descend upon every lying, sinful one. (26:221-222)

18.,19. & 20. Qalb, Ruh and Sirr:

The 'urafa' have different words for the human soul; sometimes they call it nafs (self), sometimes qalb (heart), sometimes ruh (spirit) and sometimes sirr (mystery). When the human soul is dominated and ruled by desires and passions they call it nafs. When it reaches the stage of bearing Divine knowledge, it is called qalb. When the light of Divine love dawns within it, they call it ruh. And when it reaches the stage of shuhud, they call it sirr. Of course,

the 'urafa' believe in levels beyond this, which they call khafi (the 'hidden') and akhfa (the 'most hidden').

Notes:

[1] Murtada Mutahhari, An Introduction to Ilm al Kalam, transl. By Ali Quli Qarai, Al-Tawhid, vol II No. 2

[2] R.A Nicholson, Mysticism in The Legacy of Islam, London 1931 ed. by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume pp. 211-212

[3] Ibid

[4] Ibid

[5] Dr Qasim Ghani, Tarikh e Tasawwuf Dar Islam, p. 19

[6] Farid al Din al Attar, Tadhkirat al-awliya

[7] Abu Nasr al Sarraj, al-Luma, p. 427

[8] Dr. Qasim Ghani, op. cit

[9] Abbas al Qummi, Safinat al Bihar, under s-l-m

[10] Harith al Muhasibi, not Hasan al Basri

[11] Nicholson, op cit p. 214

[12] Dr. Qasim Ghani, op cit p. 462

[13] Ibid, p. 55

[14] Abu Abd al Rahman al Sulami, Tabqat al sufiyyah, p. 206

[15] Authors work Ilal e girayeh be maddehgari

[17] Hafiz is the most beloved figure of Persian poetry in Iran

[18] Ahmad Jami was known as Shaykh al Isma

[19] al-Qushayri, Risalah, p. 33

INDEX

The Study of Islamic Philosophy

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For a long time Islamic philosophy was under a cloud of doubt and uncertainty. Some people denied its existence while others affirmed it. This uncertainty continued all through the nineteenth century. Those who denied the very existence of an Islamic philosophy feigned ignorance and maintained that the teachings of Islam opposed all free discussion and investigation, and therefore Islam has never risen to the aid of philosophy and science throughout the centuries of its existence. The only fruits Islam has borne for its followes have been intellectual despotism and dogmatism, they said. Christianity, in comparison, has been the cradle of free thought and discussion, they maintained, patronizing art and literature, encouraging the sciences, and becoming a fertile ground for the germination of new philosophy and helping it to develop and bear fruit. [1]

1. Racial Prejudice

Those who attacked and denigrated Islamic philosophy did not stop at the kind of arguments that have been mentioned. They went much further an extended their fallacious notions to general racial characteristics, and extended what they said about philosophy and learning to political matters. It is surprising that although the French politically opposed racial discrimination, they were among the people who sowed the seeds of this kind of attitude, the effects of which have continued well into the present century. For example, Renan was the first person who openly stated the view that the Semitic race is inferior to the Aryan race.[2] This judgement of Renan's had an effect on some of his contemporaries, and some of his disciples and students repeated his views and published them far and wide. This was because Renan was both an unequalled master of the Semitic languages and was more familiar with Islamic matters than other researchers of his day.

Advancing the notions of the 'Semitic spirit' in contrast to the 'Aryan spirit' by Leon Gauthier during the early part of the twentieth century was nothing other than the continuation of the argument made by Renan. In Gauthier's view, the Semitic mind is only capable of

comprehending details and particulars which are disconnected with each other or are combined and incapable of conceiving any coherent order or relationship between details. In other words, the 'Semitic spirit' is that of division and separation, or in Gauthier's words, espirit separatiste. The 'Aryan spirit' on th other hand, is the spirit of integration and synthesis, espirit fusionniste, as he calls it.[3]

It follows naturally that since the Arabs are inherently able to understand only particulars and isolated facts, they would be unable to form any theories, propositions, laws or hypotheses. It would be futile therefore to look for any philosophical or scientific investigations on their part. This is especially true now when Islam has narrowed their intellectual horizons and closed the doors to any speculative discussions, so much so that the Muslim student denigrates and ridicules science and philosophy.[4]

Those who stated such views, held that Islamic philosophy is simply an imitation of Aristotelian philosophy, and Islamic philosophical texts are nothing other than repititions of Greek ideas in Arabic.[5]

The views of Renan, which I have just mentioned, were widespread during the nineteenth century. Fortunately the days when the habits, customs, ethical, moral, and intellectual characteristics of a nation were thought to be products of either its geographical conditions or racially inherited traits have passed. Other attempts in the same vein or formulating so-called 'national psychology' or 'group psychology' proved equally futile.

Moreover, who has claimed that Islamic philosophy is a creation of Arab thinking? It is a well established fact that many nationalities such as the Persians, Indians, Turks, Egyptians, Syrians, Barbars, and Andalusians contributed to the development and enrichment of Islamic philosophy.

Islamic civilsation at its zenith not only did not block the path of science, it both confirmed and encouraged it. And far from opposing philosophy, it welcomed and embraced it with open arms. It welcomed opinions and views of every shade and colour. How can Islam, which invites mankind to observe the heavens and the earth and to contemplate and meditate upon their mysteries, oppose discussion and inquiry and restrict the freedom of thought? Even Renan, who expressed the kind of views about Islamic philosophy and science that we have already mentioned, has confessed elsewhere that Muslims treated conquered peoples with an indulgence unheard of throughout history. For example, some among the Jews and Christians accepted Islam while others preserved their ancestral faith and attained to high and honoured official positions in the courts of the Muslim caliphs and rulers. Moreover, although Muslims differed with the Jews and the Christians in regard to beliefs and religious principles, they still married in those communities.[6]

Of course, this is not the first time that this French historian and philologist has contradicted

himself. In one place he denies the very existence of such a thing as an Arab (Islamic) philosophy and says: "The only thing that the Arabs (Muslims) accomplished was to learn a Greek encyclopedia of the seventh and eighth centuries."[7] Then he goes on to contradict his denial and asserts that there is a uniquely Islamic philosophy whose special characteristics must be given attention. He confesses that, "the Arabs (Muslims), like the Latins, through engaging in interpretation of Aristotle's works learned how to formulate a philosophy full of peculiar chraracteristics and elements in serious opposition to what was taught at the Lyceum."[8] He then adds that "The original movement in Islamic philosophy should be sought in the various schools of the Mutakallimun (theologians)."[9] These contradictory statements of Renan's and the negligence evident in his works did not remain hidden from Dugat, one of his contemporaries. Dugat believed that the quality of thought such as witnessed in Ibn Sina could not result in anything other than original and sophisticated interpretations and views: and the schools of thought such as that of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites are nothing other than original creations of Islamic thought.[10]

In the twentieth century what was expressed in the form of guess and speculation by menlike Dugat wad found to be irrefutable and proven fact. Researchers became gradually more familiar with Islamic topics than before, and their understanding of the original and unique characteristics of Islamic thought gradually increased. As they came to know more about Islam, their judgement of it became fairer and more even-handed. The truth of the matter is that the malicious intent of the nineteenth century European scholars was quite evident in their handling of various Islamic topics; because, while on the one hand they admitted that "the works of the Islamic philosophers have not been adeqautely studied and our knowledge of their substance and content of their writings is incomplete,"[11] in the next breath they made the most general and blanket statements and judgements on it and said that Islamic philosophy is nothing other than an imitation of Aristotle. It is well to keep in mind that these scholars had no direct access to Islamic philosophy because they did not have the original texts at their disposal, while the Latin translations could not give a full and accurate portrayal of the scope and depth of this philosophy. Today, however, we can speak with complete certainty of the accomplishments which the Islamic civilization had made in this regard and still claim that there are a large number of topics in Islamic thought which have not yet been fully investigated and discussed.

As to the question of whether we should call this philosophy "Islamic" or "Arab", such questions are nothing but futile arguments over words and names. This philosophy developed and grew in an Islamic environment and was written in the Arabic language. The fact however that these thoughts were written in Arabic does not mean that Islamic philosophy is a creation of the Arab element. We who have already condemned racism have never claimed any such things. Islam gathered in its fold numerous nationalities and all of them contributed to the growth and development of its thought. And as for this philosophy being called "Islamic", it can not be claimed that it is the product of the intellectual efforts of the Muslims alone, since such a claim would not sit well with the historical evidence available. Historical

records show that the earliest teachers of the Muslims were Nestorian, Jacobites, Jews, and Sabaeans, and that Muslim scholars cooperated with their Nestorian and Jewish contemporaries in their philosophical and scientific investigations.

In any case, I am inclined to call this philosophy "Islamic" because of two reasons. Firstly, Islam is not just a religion it is also a civilization; and the topics of Islamic philosophy, despite the variety of its sources and backgrounds of writers, are rooted in the Islamic civilization. Secondly, the problems, the foundations, and aims of this philosophy are all Islamic, and it was Islam that formed this cohesive philosophy by gathering teachings and views belonging to many different cultures and schools of thought.

2. Islamic Philosophy

Islamic philosophy is unique in the sort of topics and issues with which it deals, the sort of problems it attempts to solve and the methods it uses in order to solve them

Islamic philosophy concerned itself with such matters as the problem of unity and multiplicity, the relationship between God and the world, both of which had been subjects of heated controversies and discussions among the theologians for a long time.[12]

Another aim of this philosophy was to reconcile revelation with reason, knowledge with faith, and religion with philosophy, and to show that reason and revelation do not contradict each other, and that religion would be accepted by the pagan when it is illuminated by the light of philosophic wisdom. It aimed to prove also that when religion embraces philosophy it takes on philosophical qualities just as philosophy too assumes the colour of religion. In all, Islamic philosophy is a creature of the environment in which it grew and flourished, and as is quite obvious, it is a religious and spiritual philosophy.

(a) Topics: Although Islamic philosophy is religiously oriented, it has not ignored any major philosophical issues. For example, it has extensively discussed the problem of being, and defended its position on issues like time, space, matter, and life. Its treatment of epistemology is both unique and comprehensive. It drew distinction between the self (nafs) and reason, inborn and acquired qualities, accuracy and error, surmise and certain knowledge. It has investigated the question of what is virtue and happiness and divided virtues into a number of categories and reached the conclusion that the highest virtue is uninterrupted contemplation and serene realization of the Truth.

Muslim thinkers divided philosophy into the two generally accepted categories of 'speculative' and 'practical' and their discussions extended over varied topics such as natural philosophy, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics and politics.[l3] Evidently, the Islamic thinkers believed philosophy to have a much greater scope than is generally given it today, and in this regard their work was similar to that of the Greek philosophers, specially Aristotle, whom

they imitated and followed. Thus, Islamic philosophy was intermingled with medicine, biology, chemistry, botany, astronomy and music. Generally speaking, all the fields of science were considered to be nothing other than branches of philosophy.

Considering all that has been said, it would not be an overstatement to claim that Islamic philosophy encompasses all the various aspects of Islamic culture. It should, of course, be kept in mind that during the ages when Islamic philosophy was developing and maturing, learning and investigation were carried out in an encyclopedic and all-round manner. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the full range of Islamic philosophical thought cannot be fully accessible through the study of philosophical texts alone. In order that a full understanding be attained, it is necessary to expand the range of investigation and research to include discussion of theology (kalam) and mysticism (tasawwuf). It might even be necessary to relate any discussion of Islamic philosophy to the history of Islamic Law and the principles of jurisprudence. It is not rare to discover philosophical ideas, concepts, and views in what are ostensibly Islamic scientific texts dealing with such topics as medicine, geometery, chemistry, and astronomy. Furthermore, some Muslim scientists showed more courage and freedom in expressing philosophical views than that shown by those specializing in the field of philosophy. Also, amongst Islamic mystical and theological discussions, views and positions are encountered which in their profundity and precision equal any found amongst the Aristotelians. These Muslim thinkers challenged Aristotle's philosophy and struggled against it for many years. This struggle led to the emergence of a distinctive Islamic philosophy and thought. Later on a certain methodology and forms of rational analysis were introduced into discussions about the foundations of Islamic law and the principles of jurisprudence which have a distinctly perceptible philosophical tinge. It is even possible to uncover in their involved procedures, rules and methods similar to those in use today.

(b) Islamic Philosophy and Christian Scholasticism: What we have already said may give an idea of the wide scope of philosophical thought in Islam. And it would be a mistake to limit ourselves-as the nineteenth century European scholars did-to the study of a few scattered Latin and Hebrew translations. In fact, if the depth and the scope of Muslim philosophers' thinking is ever to be clearly and fully understood, it must be done through an examination of the original sources themselves.

However, even though not all the original texts have as yet been published and subjected to research, enough is known to convince us that the material gathered by the Muslim thinkers of the Middle Ages was greater than that gathered by the Christian scholars of that era, that the Muslim thinkers explored wider horizons, enjoyed more complete freedom, and made greater inventions and discoveries than their Christian counterparts. If, therefore, one is to speak of a Christian philosophy, or as it is better known, of Christian Scholasticism, it would be more apt to speak first of an Islamic philosophy and an Islamic Scholasticism, especially since Christian Scholastic thought owes much to Islamic Scholasticism for developing and clarifying many of its problems and issues.[14]

Islamic philosophy is to the East what Latin philosophy is to the West. The combination of these two philosophical traditions plus the scientific investigations carried out by Jewish scholars complete the history of speculative thought of the Middle Ages. In order that the true place of Islamic philosophy can clearly be understood, and a full understanding of the various stages in the development of human thought be attained, it is essential that we investigate the relationship of the Islamic philosophy with ancient, medieval, and modern philosophies.

(c) The Islamic and the Greek Philosophies: We do not deny the fact that philosophical thought in Islam has been influenced by Greek philosophy and that Islamic philosophers have mostly adoped Aristotle's views. Nor do we deny that Islamic thinkers looked upon Plotinus with wonder and followed him in many instances. If a word is not repeated it dies, and who has not been an apprentice at the school of his predecessors? We, the children of the twentieth century, are still relying on the scientific work done by the Greeks and Romans in a number of fields. If, however, we should go so far as to label the use and join the chorus sung by the likes of Renan who claims that Islamic philosophy is nothing other than a replica of Aristotelian philosophy, or of some others who say that it is an exact copy of Neo-Platonic philosophy, we would be completely mistaken.[15] The truth of the matter is that Islamic philosophy has been influenced by a number of factors, the result of which was birth of new ideas and views. Just as it has been influenced by Greek thought, it has also been influenced by the Indian and Persian cultural traditions.

The exchange and adoption of ideas do not always imply blind obedience. Several individuals may examine a particular topic and the result of their investigations may appear in a number of forms. A philosopher may utilize some of the ideas of another philosopher but this does not prevent him from giving birth to new ideas or to wholly new philosophical systems. Spinoza, for example, even though clearly followed Descartes, was the originator of an independent philosophical system of his own, and Ibn Sina, even though a loyal disciple of Aristotle, put forth views never professed by his master. Each of the Islamic philosophers lived in a particular environment distinct from the environment of the other, and it would be a mistake if we ignore the influence that these particular circumstances have had on their philosophical ideas and views. Thus the Muslim world could have a philosophy appropriate to its social conditions and religious principles. As to what the nature of this philosophy is, only an extensive discussion and analysis of its main ideas and principles could provide us with the answer.

(d) Islamic Philosophy and Modern Philosophy: It is not possible for us to adequately discuss the relationship of Islamic philosophy with modern philosophy in this article and speak of the chain of ideas that relate these two together. This is specially true since repeated attempts have been made during the middle of the present century to discover the principles of modern philosophy and their roots in Christian Scholasticism.

Today, when we are aware, of the relationship between modern and medieval philosophy, on

the one hand, and the influence of Islamic philosophy on European medieval thought on the other, how is it possible to ignore the influence that Islamic thought has had on modern philosophy? In this study we shall discuss some examples of this influence and relation. As we shall prove, the similarity between Islamic philosophy and modern philosophy is so strong that one may speak of the existence of a kind of kinship between them.

Without going into details we can say that the history of modern philosophy originates with the consideration of two important issues: firstly, the significance of the experimental aspect, which deals with matters related to external reality; secondly speculation, which is concerned with the rational sciences. In other words, the experience of Bacon on the one hand and the doubt of Descartes on the other, have been the subjects of discussion and controversy in the modern age. Moreover, it has been pointed out before that Christian Scholastic thinkers and the Renaissance philosophers engaged in experimentation and paid attention to the world of nature a long time before Bacon. Roger Bacon, whom Renan calls "the real prince of thought during the middle ages" did not limit himself to carrying out chemical experiments but widened the scope of his experiments to include the world of nature. Now if it can be shown that he had contact with the works of Islamic scientists, we can conclude that his experimental approach, or rather the origin of experimentation during the Renaissance, were both products of Islamic thought and Muslim thinkers, because they were the ones who used observatories and laboratories in order to discover scientific truths.

As for the Cartesian doubt, there is evidence that it had some precedence during the Christian Middle Ages and we believe that any study of the origin of Cartesian doubt will remain defective without any attempt to discover it in Islamic philosophy. Who can say that the doubt of Descartes is not wholly or partially influenced by the doubt of Al-Ghazzali? Even if we set aside the question of influence, the two philosophers are still found to think in parallel and similar terms. Elsewhere in our discussions we have shown that Descartes' "cogito" is not entirely inspired by St. Augestine and that there is much similarity between it and Ibn Sina's idea of "man suspended in spaced."[16]

In short, since Christian and Jewish Scholasticism-which is closely related to the Islamic world-is the link connecting Islamic philosophy to modern philosophical speculation, the probability of transfer and exchange of ideas cannot be denied.

Indeed it would amount to hasty generalization if, without having first properly investigated and studied the issue, we were to say that there have been no connections between the East and the West in regard to the world of thought and philosophic and rational speculation. It has been proven today that an exchange dating back to the ancient times did exist and it was renewed during the middle ages. What is there then to stop such a connection from existing today? Ideas and opinions cannot be imprisoned in limited geographical boundaries, their movement cannot be restricted. What was once referred to as the secret of the atom, is common scientific knowledge today in all parts of the world.

Viewpoints of Islamic Philosophy

We cannot find any example of a full and complete study of Islamic philosophy either in the East or in the West before the middle of the nineteenth century. This is so because whenever the Western scholar turned his attention to the study of matters relating to the East, it was mostly with the economic or political aspects that he was concerned, not with the cultural aspect. If we encounter any instances of such cultural studies in the eighteenth century or the early part of the nineteenth century, it is mostly based on Latin sources. As for the Easterners, they were so lost in economic and political difficulties during this period that they had no interest in keepimg alive their ancient culture or revitalizing their Islamic heritage.

(a) The Movement of Orientalism: In the second half of the nineteenth century the European Orientalists became interested m Islamic subjects and became vanguards of a movement that rapidly developed and reached its zenith during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Some of these European scholars even travailed to the East and studied in its schools in order to better understand the spiritual and intellectual life of the Orient. Europe and America competed with each other in the publication of Islamic culture. Schools where Oriental languages were taught, and colleges where Islamic subjects were studied were established in Paris, Rome, London, and Berlin. Scholarly and historical societies were formed for the sole purpose of investigating and examining the various aspects of Islamic civilization.

Periodically, seminars were held by Orientalists, where valuable presentations and discussions occured. At the same time, learned and scholarly journals and publications were devoted to the study of Oriental subjects. These debates, discussions and exchanges of views, caused the cloud of ignorance and confusion to be scattered and the facts of the matter to be more cleady perceived.

This Orientalist movement had welcome results. Texts unknown up to the time were discovered. Precious manuscripts of texts were published. The new techniques of publication of books accompanied with notes and indices came into widespread usage, and a number of the most important works in the libraries of the Muslim world were translated into living European languages such as Italian, French, English and Gemman. The publishing of such translated works in turn stimulated interest and discussion in various aspects of Islamic civilization such as politics, economics, history, literature, Quranic interpretation and exegesis, science and philosophy all of which received brief treatment in articles published in scholarly journals and were dealt with extensively in books.

Research and study increased in proportion to the level of knowledge and information that became available. Scholars and investigators fell into the habit of spending years in scholarly

research in order to clarify hidden or poorly understood points. Such intensive researches led various groups of scholars to specialize in different aspects of the Islamic civilization. Some became experts in the Arabic language and Islamic literature while others became specialists in Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Still a third group concentrated on Muslim mysticism, while a fourth group delved deep into the field of Islamic science and philosophy. The fruit of this expansion and specialization in the field of Islamic studies was the Encyclopedia of Islam which was published in French, German and English languages. This book is itself the clear proof of the extensive knowledge of Islam gathered by the Orientalists and their intense interest in Islamic culture and civilization. The Encyclopedia of Islam is indeed a rich and important source of information indispensable for every researcher of Islamic subjects.

The East was also influenced by the work of the Western Orientalists. The scholars of the East adopted many of their views, translated many of their texts, and following the path paved by them, became their partners in reviving the glory and brilliance of Eastern culture They also finished what had been left incomplete by the Western Orientalists or filled in gaps left in their treatment of various subjects. These contributions, although small in each instance, were spread over a wide range, so that none of the aspects of Islamic culture were ignored. Still what has been done is only the beginning of an effort that must grow and expand.

(b) The Orientalists And Philosophy: Philosophy was not left out of the general trend described above. Texts written by Muslim philosophers, which had remained in their original manuscript form, were published and the original Arabic versions were compared with the Hebrew and Latin translations of them which were extant. The study of their notes and commentaries helped a great deal in solving any problems which may have existed in regard to their meaning. Without the efforts of the Orientalists, these books would have remained in some corner of a library, unread, gathering dust. And if it were not for the fact that they understood a number of ancient and modern languages and possessed a correct methodology, the works published by them would not have been characterized by such care and authenticity.

The work of the European Orientalists was not limited to the printing and publication of books; they tried to discover and explore the whole horizon of intellectual life in Islam and to write about it. For instance, they wrote about the history of Islamic philosophy and philosophers, theology and the theologians, Sufism and the Sufies and described the various sects and schools of thought found in Islam. Sometimes they investigated the life, opinions and views of one individual. At other times they wrote books about scientific terms and definitions, so that their names were inseparably linked with the subject of their specialization. Who, for example, on hearing the name of Nicholson is not reminded of tasawwuf? It would be outside of the scope of this work to mention all the Orientalists alongside the subjects of their specialization which made them famous. It would suffice to say that Orientalism possessed a unique vigour and vitality during the first quarter of the present

century which also included the study and investigation of speculative subjects. In spite of all this, the history of Islamic philosophy and the views of its most eminent thinkers are as yet insufficiently understood and it is the missing link in the chain of human intellectual history. We still do not know exactly how this philosophy came into existence, what was the manner of its development, what factors caused its flourishing and flowering, and what were the causes of its decay. Nor has the work of the Islamic philosophers ever been scrutinized one by one so as to show how much each one of them borrowed or inherited from his predecessors and how much of his philosophy was the result of his own original thought. The sad truth of the matter is that the shining stars of Islamic philosophy are strangers in their own lands and to their own people. What better proof of this than the fact that many of us Easterners know more about Rousseau and Spencer than about Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi? And if God had not so decreed that a group of Orientalists should make a study of them, today we would have known nothing useful about these great figures.

The work of the Orientalists, however, is too limited in scope to adequately deal with a subject such as Islamic philosophy. Moreover, in some cases they contain either literal or technical errors, or are deficient in some other manner. Sometimes these studies are so brief that it is not possible to fathom the intent of their writers. Perhaps the cause of all these difficulties is that some of the scholars who have investigated Islamic philosophy do not understand the Arabic language sufficiently and have not mastered the history of Islamic culture. Others, not lacking in any of the aforementioned aspects are completely ignorant of the history of Islamic philosophy. There are, of course, brilliant exceptions to this general weakness. Two examples of such beautiful and informative works are Van den Bergh's translation of the Metaphysics of Ibn Rushd, and De Boer's History of Islamic Philosophy. One cannot reall Van den Bergh's book and not feel that he is reading a philosopher commenting on philosophy.[16] And one cannot reall De Boer's book without wishing that he had made it a much larger work.[17]

Of course, much time has passed since the publication of the books mentioned above and the other works by the Orientalists. They are thus in need of revision, and the conclusions reached in them must be re-examined in the light of the far greater knowledge of Islamic thought now available. This is especially true since the more access we have attained to the original manuscripts, the greater was the rapidity by which our problems have been solved and our mistakes corrected.

Although the history of the efforts to gather the inheritance of Islamic tradition and attempts to revitalize the Islamic civilization date back only to the beginning of the twentieth century, a great deal of progress has been made and much material has been made available to the researcher. Nevertheless, the need for new analysis and discussion based on the study of these newly available facts and source material is absolutely undeniable.

(c) The Road Ahead: We must continue on the path that we have been following until now and fully discover this hidden link in the chain of human intellectual history, and put it in its proper place. Up to now, the Orientalists have made important contributions and have made great efforts to accomplish this task. It is our duty to try to overtake them; and if we are unable to do this, at least we should keep pace with them. It is not enough for us to make a thinker or an inventor famous by mentioning his ideas or his inventions, we must make an effort to revive his works. All the nations of the world are in a race with one another in trying to publish the works of their scientists and thinkers.

The field of our study is vast and there are innumerable opportunities for research. Our first duty is to gather and publish the writings of the philosophers of Islam; works which have remained as manuscripts until this day, or have been published in an unsatisfactory form. I say this because as long as we have not studied the works of our philosophers and scientists in the language in which they were originally written, we cannot understand the essence and the core of their teachings.

When we found out that treatises written by Al-Kindi are to be found in the libraries of the city of Istanbul, or that manuscripts of the works of Al-Farabi are scattered among libraries of London, Paris, and Escorial,[18] or that from the famous work of Ibn Sina, Shifa', the publisher has printed only the first volume, Logic,[19] then we realized the importance and necessity of gathering the texts of our philosophers and publishing them. It is unnecessary to mention the fact that Ibn Rushd is better known in the Latin world than he is in the Muslim world, and that some American Orientalists have been publishing his writings for some time now.

The publishing of these texts would take a long time. Therefore it is necessary that a number of individuals and academies cooperate with one another in accomplishing this important task. The Cairo University had at one time adopted an interesting and effective technique in that it gathered films of some of the manuscripts and printed some samples from them. Unfortunately it has recently stopped doing this. Maybe it has been because of the war, and the university will resume this practice. I also hope that the College of Alexandria will also join this effort, and finally that all the universities of the East shall compete with one another in accomplishing this task.

A comment about the libraries of Istanbul must be made here. In these libraries, the heritage of more than six centuries of Islamic culture is stored. Naturally, texts can be found there the copies of which do not exist anywhere else in the world. For example, a German Orientalist has recently found some precious volumes in these libraries among which Ash'ari's Maqalat al-Islamiyin can be mentioned. This book is an important source in the field of the history of Islamic doctrines. Since the publication of Ash'ari's book and the Nihayat al-Aqdam of Shahristani, some of the views we had held regarding Islamic theology (kalam) and theologians (mutakallimun) have changed.

I have no doubt that our Turkish brothers are aware of the value of this priceless heritage, and if they themselves are unable to publish these masterpieces they shall not hesitate to make them available to those who wish to do so.

Besides the publishing of these texts, we should also engage in investigation and discussion of the works of Islamic philosophers and get to know them just as well as we do the non-Islamic philosophers. We should prepare biographies of our thinkers, describe their views in detail, explain the factors which were instrumental in formation of their views, clearly evaluate their intellectual debt to the ancients and to their immediate predecessors, and examine the similarities existing between their ideas and those of their contemporaries.

I hope that the day will come when they will write about Al-Farabi just as they are writing today about Musa ibn Maymun, that they become as familiar with the works of Ibn Sina as they are with the writings of Thomas Aquinas, and shall discuss Al-Ghazzali just as they discuss Descartes. That would be the day when it can be justifiably said that Islamic philosophy has been given the recognition and stature it so rightly deserves.

Notes:

[1]. See V. Cousin, Cours de l' histoire de la philosophie, pp.48-49, Paris l841.

[2]. E. Renan, Histoire Generale de systeme comparedes langues semitiques;

[3]. L. Gauthier, L'esprit semitique et l'esprit aryen, pp. 66~67, Paris 1923, see also I. Madkour, La Place d' al-Farabi, p, 14, Paris, 1934

[4]. Renan, "Le 'islamisme et la Science", dans Discours et Confe'rences, p. 337 Paris, 1887; Madkour, La Place d' al-Farabi, p. 54.

[5]. Renan, Averroe's et l'Averroesme, pp. 79, II, Paris, eighth edition.

[6]. Ibid, vol. I, p. 171. See also Goldziher, Le dogme et la loi de 1' Islam, pp. 29-34.

[7]. Renan, Averroe's, Avertissement, p.11.

[8]. Ibid, p.89.

[9]. Ibid.

[10] G. Dugat, Histoire des philsophes et des theologians musulmans, p. XV,

[11] G. Tennemann, Manuel de l' histoire de la philosophic (French translation by V. Cousin), T. I, pp.358-359, Paris 1839.

[12]. Madkour, La place d'al-Farabi, p.46 et suive.

[13]. Madkour, L'Organon d'Aristote, p. 49 et suive, Paris, 1934.

[14] L. Gauthier, "Scolastique musulmane et sehoiastique chretienne", dans Revue d'Histoire de la philosophie, Paris, 1928.

[15] Renan, Averroe's, p. 88; Duhem, Le systeme du monde T. IV p 321 et suive, Paris, 1917.

[16] S. Van den Bergh, Die Epitome der Metaphysik des Averroes, Leiden, 1924.

[17]. T.J. De Boer, Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam, Stuttgart, 1901, tr. ang., par E.R, Jones, The History of Philosophy in Islam, London, 1903.

[18] Madkour, La place, pp.223-225.

[19]. Madkour, L' Organon, pp. 19-20.

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The Islamic Concept of Knowledge

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While it is an open question whether an explicit and systematically worked out Islamic epistemology exists, it is undeniable that various epistemological issues have been discussed in Muslim philosophy with an orientation different from that of Western epistemology. Today attempts are being made to understand the basic epistemological issues in terms of that orientation. This is a valuable effort that deserves our interest and encouragement. However, it can be fruitful only if the practice of rigorous analysis is kept up, with close attention to the precise definitions of the various concepts involved.

With this view, an attempt is made in this paper to delineate the different shades and connotations of the term 'ilm, i.e., knowledge, in the Islamic context. It is hoped that this brief attempt will serve as a step for future groundwork for the construction of a framework for an Islamic theory of knowledge.

In the Islamic theory of knowledge, the term used for knowledge in Arabic is 'ilm, which, as Rosenthal has justifiably pointed out, has a much wider connotation than its synonyms in English and other Western languages. 'Knowledge' falls short of expressing all the aspects of 'ilm. Knowledge in the Western world means information about something, divine or corporeal, while 'ilm is an all-embracing term covering theory, action and education. Rosenthal, highlighting the importance of this term in Muslim civilization and Islam, says that it gives them a distinctive shape.

In fact there is no concept that has been operative as a determinant of the Muslim civilization in all its aspects to the same extent as 'ilm. This holds good even for the most powerful among the terms of Muslim religious life such as, for instance, tawhid "recognition of the oneness of God," ad-din, "the true religion," and many others that are used constantly and emphatically. None of them equals ilm in depth of meaning and wide incidence of use. There is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of the daily life of the average Muslim that remains untouched by the all pervasive attitude toward "knowledge" as something of supreme value for Muslim being. 'ilm is Islam, even if the theologians have been hesitant to accept the technical correctness of this equation. The very fact of their passionate discussion of the concept attests to its fundamental importance for Islam.

It may be said that Islam is the path of "knowledge." No other religion or ideology has so much emphasized the importance of 'ilm. In the Qur'an the word 'alim has occurred in 140 places, while al-'ilm in 27. In all, the total number of verses in which 'ilm or its derivatives and associated words are used is 704. The aids of knowledge such as book, pen, ink etc. amount to almost the same number. Qalam occurs in two places, al-kitab in 230 verses, among which al-kitab for al-Qur'an occurs in 81 verses. Other words associated with writing occur in 319 verses. It is important to note that pen and book are essential to the acquisition of knowledge. The Islamic revelation started with the word **iqra'** ('read!' or 'recite!').

According to the Qur'an, the first teaching class for Adam started soon after his creation and Adam was taught 'all the Names'.

Allah is the first teacher and the absolute guide of humanity. This knowledge was not imparted to even the Angels. In Usul al-Kafi there is a tradition narrated by Imam Musa al-Kazim ('a) that 'ilm is of three types: ayatun muhkamah (irrefutable signs of God), faridatun 'adilah (just obligations) and sunnat al-qa'imah (established traditions of the Prophet [s]). This implies that 'ilm, attainment of which is obligatory upon all Muslims covers the sciences of theology, philosophy, law, ethics, politics and the wisdom imparted to the Ummah by the Prophet (S). Al-Ghazali has unjustifiably differentiated between useful and useless types of knowledge. Islam actually does not consider any type of knowledge as harmful to human beings. However, what has been called in the Qur'an as useless or rather harmful knowledge, consists of pseudo sciences or the lores prevalent in the Jahiliyyah.

'Ilm is of three types: information (as opposed to ignorance), natural laws, and knowledge by conjecture. The first and second types of knowledge are considered useful and their acquisition is made obligatory. As for the third type, which refers to what is known through guesswork and conjecture, or is accompanied with doubt, we shall take that into consideration later, since conjecture or doubt are sometimes essential for knowledge as a means, but not as an end.

Beside various Qur'anic verses emphasizing the importance of knowledge, there are hundreds of Prophetic traditions that encourage Muslims to acquire all types of knowledge from any corner of the world. Muslims, during their periods of stagnation and decline, confined themselves to theology as the only obligatory knowledge, an attitude which is generally but wrongly attributed to al-Ghazali's destruction of philosophy and sciences in the Muslim world. Al-Ghazali, of course, passed through a turbulent period of skepticism, but he was really in search of certainty, which he found not in discursive knowledge but in mystic experience. In his favour it must be said that he paved the way for liberating the believer from blind imitation and helping him approach the goal of certain knowledge.

In the Islamic world, gnosis (ma'rifah) is differentiated from knowledge in the sense of

acquisition of information through a logical processes. In the non-Islamic world dominated by the Greek tradition, hikmah (wisdom) is considered higher than knowledge. But in Islam 'ilm is not mere knowledge. It is synonymous with gnosis (ma'rifah). Knowledge is considered to be derived from two sources: 'aql and 'ilm huduri (in the sense of unmediated and direct knowledge acquired through mystic experience).

It is important to note that there is much emphasis on the exercise of the intellect in the Qur'an and the traditions, particularly in the matter of ijtihad. In the Sunni world qiyas (the method of analogical deduction as propounded by Imam Abu Hanifah) is accepted as an instrument of ijtihad, but his teacher and spiritual guide, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a), gave pre-eminence to 'aql in this matter. In the entire Shi'i literature of fiqh and usul al-fiqh, 'aql is much more emphasized, because qiyas is only a form of quasi-logical argument, while 'aql embraces all rational faculties of human beings. Even intuition or mystic experience are regarded as a higher stage of 'aql. In Shi'i literature in particular, and Sunni literature in general, 'aql is considered to be a prerequisite for knowledge. Starting from Usul al-Kafi, all Shi'i compendia of hadith devote their first chapter to the merits of 'aql and the virtues of 'ilm. In Sunni compendia of hadith, including al-Sihah al-sittah and up to al-Ghazali's Ihya, a chapter is devoted to this issue, though it is not given a first priority. This shows that there is a consensus among the Muslims on the importance of 'aql which is denoted by such words as ta'aqqul, tafaqquh and tadabbur in the Qur'an.

Exercise of the intellect ('aql) is of significance in the entire Islamic literature which played an important role in the development of all kinds of knowledge, scientific or otherwise, in the Muslim world. In the twentieth century, the Indian Muslim thinker, Iqbal in his Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pointed out that ijtihad was a dynamic principle in the body of Islam. He claims that much before Francis Bacon the principles of scientific induction were emphasized by the Qur'an, which highlights the importance of observation and experimentation in arriving at certain conclusions. It may also be pointed out that Muslim fuqaha and mufassirun made use of the method of linguistic analysis in interpreting the Quranic injunctions and the sunnah of the Prophet (S). Al-Ghazalis Tahatut al-falasifah is probably the first philosophical treatise that made use of the linguistic analytical method to clarify certain philosophical issues. I personally feel that he is rather maligned than properly understood by both the orthodox and liberal Muslim interpreters of his philosophy. His method of doubt paved the way for a healthy intellectual activity in the Muslim world, but because of historical and social circumstances, it culminated in the stagnation of philosophical and scientific thinking, which later made him a target of criticism by philosophers.

There was made a distinction between wisdom (hikmah) and knowledge in the pre-Islamic philosophy developed under the influence of Greek thought. In Islam there is no such distinction. Those who made such a distinction led Muslim thought towards un-Islamic thinking. The philosophers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina are considered to be hakims (philosophers) and in this capacity superior to 'ulama', and fuqaha This misconception resulted in al-Ghazali's attack on the philosophers. Islam is a religion that invites its followers

to exercise their intellect and make use of their knowledge to attain the ultimate truth (haqq). Muslim thinkers adopted different paths to attain this goal. Those who are called philosophers devoted themselves to logic and scientific method and they were derogated by the Sufis, though some of them, such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and al-Ghazali took recourse to the mystic path in their quest of the truth at some stage. As I said earlier, 'ilm may not be translated as mere knowledge; it should be emphasized that it is also gnosis or ma'rifah. One may find elements of mystic experience in the writings of Muslim philosophers. In Kashf al-mahjub of al-Hujwiri a distinction is made between khabar (information) and nazar (analytic thought). This applies not only to Muslim Sufis but also to most of the Muslim philosophers who sought to attain the ultimate knowledge which could embrace all things, corporeal or divine. In the Western philosophical tradition there is a distinction between the knowledge of the Divine Being and knowledge pertaining to the physical world. But in Islam there is no such distinction. Ma'rifah is ultimate knowledge and it springs from the knowledge of the self (Man 'arafa nafsahu fa qad 'arafa Rabbbahu, 'One who realizes one's own self realizes his Lord'). This process also includes the knowledge of the phenomenal world. Therefore, wisdom and knowledge which are regarded as two different things in the non-Muslim world are one and the same in the Islamic perspective.

In the discussion of knowledge, an important question arises as to how one can overcome his doubts regarding certain doctrines about God, the universe, and man. It is generally believed that in Islam, as far as belief is concerned, there is no place for doubting and questioning the existence of God, the prophethood of Hadrat Muhammad (S) and the Divine injunctions, that Islam requires unequivocal submission to its dictates. This general belief is a misconception in the light of Islam's emphasis on 'aql. In the matter of the fundamentals of faith (usu-l al-Din), the believer is obliged to accept tawhid, nubuwwah and ma'd (in the Shi'i faith, 'adl, i.e. Divine Justice, and imamah are also fundamentals of faith) on rational grounds or on the basis of one's existential experience. This ensures that there is room for doubt and skepticism in Islam before reaching certainty in Iman. The sufis have described iman as consisting of three stages: 'ilm al-yaqin (certain knowledge),'ayn al-yaqin (knowledge by sight) and haqq al-yaqin (knowledge by the unity of subject and object). The last stage is attainable by an elect few.

'Ilm is referred to in many Quranic verses as 'light' (nur), and Allah is also described as the ultimate nur. it means that 'ilm in the general sense is synonymous with the 'light' of Allah. This light does not shine for ever for all the believers. If is hidden sometimes by the clouds of doubt arising from the human mind. Doubt is sometimes interpreted in the Quran as darkness, and ignorance also is depicted as darkness in a number of its verses. Allah is depicted as nur, and knowledge is also symbolized as nur. Ignorance is darkness and ma'rifah is light. In the ayat al-kursi Allah says: (Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth ... Allah is the Master of the believers and He guides them out of the darkness into light). Usually darkness is interpreted as unbelief and light as faith in God. There are so many verses in the Quran as well as the traditions of the Prophet (S) that emphasize that light may be attained by those who struggle against darkness.

Among Muslim philosophers, particularly some Mu'tazilites, like Nazzam, al-Jahiz, Aba Hashim al-Jubbai and others, adopted the path of skepticism. Al-Ghazali was the most eminent among Muslim philosophers who, in his spiritual auto-biography, al-Munqidh min al-dalal, elaborated the path of skepticism which he travelled to attain the ultimate truth. There have been some Muslim thinkers, like Abu Hashim al-Jubba'i, al-Baqillanis al-Nazzam and others, who advocated skepticism in order to arrive at certain religious faith. Skepticism is a philosophy that has three different meanings: denial of all knowledge, agnosticism, and a method to approach certainty. Most of the Muslims philosophers sought the goal of certainty. Skepticism in the general sense of the impossibility of knowledge is not compatible with Islamic teachings. It is acceptable only when it leads from uncertainty to certainty. The skeptical method has two aspects, rejection of all absolute knowledge, and acceptance of the path to overcome uncertainty. Muslim philosophers have followed the second path, because there has been an emphasis on rejecting blind faith. Shaykh al-Mufid (an eminent Shi'i faqih) said that there was a very narrow margin between faith and disbelief in so far as the believer imitated certain theologians. In his view, an imitator is on the verse of unbelief (kufr).

In Islam 'ilm is not confined to the acquisition of knowledge only, but also embraces socio-political and moral aspects. Knowledge is not mere information; it requires the believers to act upon their beliefs and commit themselves to the goals which Islam aims at attaining. In brief, I would like to say that the theory of knowledge in the Islamic perspective is not just a theory of epistemology. It combines knowledge, insight, and social action as its ingredients. I would like to cite here a tradition of the Prophet (S) narrated by Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib: Once Gabriel came to Adam. He brought with him faith, morality (haya') and 'aql (reason) and asked him to choose one of the three. When he chose 'aql, the others were told by Gabriel to return to heaven, They said that they were ordered by Allah to accompany 'aql wherever it remained. This indicates how comprehensive are the notions of intellect and knowledge in Islam, and how deeply related they are to faith and the moral faculty.

The all-round development of various branches of knowledge pertaining to physical and social phenomena, as well as the process of logical argumentation for justification of Islamic doctrine and deduction of Islamic laws (ahkam) with reference to Qur'anic injunctions and the Prophetic tradition, is indebted to Islam's notion of 'ilm. Scientific knowledge, comprising natural and physical sciences, was sought and developed by Muslim scientists and mathematicians vigorously from the beginning of the last decades of the first century of Hijrah. The scientific endeavour found its flowering period with the establishment of the Bayt al-Hikmah in the reign of al-Ma'mun. Undoubtedly the major contributions in philosophy and sciences were made by Iranians, but the myth created by the orientalists that the fundamental sources of Islam, viz. the Qur'an and Sunnah, did not contain scientific and philosophical ideas is totally false. As said earlier, not only the Qur'an and hadith encouraged Muslims or rather made it obligatory for them to pursue truth freely from all possible sources, but also contained certain guiding principles that could provide a secure foundation for the development of religious and secular sciences. Some Prophetic traditions even give priority to

learning over performing supererogatory rites of worship. There are several traditions that indicate that a scholar's sleep is more valuable than an ignorant believer's journey for pilgrimage (hajj) and participation in holy war, and that the drops of a scholar's ink are more sacred than the blood of a martyr. Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) said that the reward for piety in the other world would be bestowed upon a believer in proportion to the degree of his intellectual development and his knowledge.

Islam never maintained that only theology was useful and the empirical sciences useless or harmful. This concept was made common by semi-literate clerics or by the time servers among them who wanted to keep common Muslims in the darkness of ignorance and blind faith so that they would not be able to oppose unjust rulers and resist clerics attached to the courts of tyrants. This attitude resulted in the condemnation of not only empirical science but also 'ilm al-kalam and metaphysics, which resulted in the decline of Muslims in politics and economy. Even today large segments of Muslim society, both the common man and many clerics suffer from this malady. This unhealthy and anti-knowledge attitude gave birth to some movements which considered elementary books of theology as sufficient for a Muslim, and discouraged the assimilation or dissemination of empirical knowledge as leading to the weakening of faith.

Apart from Shaykh al-Mufid and other Shi'i scholars, a number of classical Sunni fuqaha and 'ulama,' even those considered to be conservative, like Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, regarded emulation or imitation (taqlid) as religiously unauthorized and harmful. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti held that taqlid was forbidden by both the salaf and the khalaf (early and later generations of scholars). He cited al-Shafi'i's opposition to taqlid. Ibn Hazm followed the same line. These and many other fuqaha' and theologians emphasized the exercise of 'aql and ijtihad as obligatory for the believers. Imam 'Ali ('a) gave a place of pride to reason even in the matters of religion. Abu 'Ala' al-Ma'arri believed that there was no imam except reason. Thus it is obvious that the Shi'ah and Sunnis, not withstanding their differences on several issues, agreed on the role of reason and the necessity of ijtihad. It is unfortunate that some recent movements of Islamic resurgence in the Sunni world, e.g. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan etc., are opposed to reason and preach emulation, distorting the role of ijtihad and disregarding even major Salafi theologians. This attitude, they do not realize, is self-contradictory and self defeating for their own cause. It is a good sign that apart from the rejection of 'aql in recent times by some Sunni quarters, attempts have been made and are still being made to revive the practice of ijtihad and combining social, scientific and secular knowledge with the teaching of theology, fiqh, usul al-fiqh, hadith, 'ilm al-rijal, kalam and tafsir, whose acquisition is essential for ijtihad in the matters pertaining to the faith and its practice.

Another myth propagated by the orientalists, that the Arab mind was not akin to philosophizing and that it was the Aryan mind, i.e. of the Iranians, which introduced philosophy in the Muslim world, is equally unfounded and a conspiracy against the history of Muslim philosophy and its significant contribution to the development of sciences which not

only benefited Muslim world but also contributed to the enrichment of human learning, culture and civilization. Ironically, despite the claim that the Aryan mind introduced philosophical and scientific thinking and research, Muslim philosophy is called 'Arab philosophy' by the orientalists, implying a contradiction inherent in their prejudice against the Semites. In Islam-of course, after the Qur'an and the Prophet's hadith-'Ali's sermons and letters, later collected under the title of Nahj al-halaghah, contained the seeds of philosophical and scientific inquiry, and he was an Arab. Similarly, the Mu'tazilah, known as the first rationalists among Muslims, consisted of Arabs. Even the officially recognized first Muslim philosopher, al-Kindi, was an Arab.

After the decline of philosophical and scientific inquiry in the Muslim east, philosophy and sciences flourished in the Muslim west due to endeavours of the thinkers of Arab origin like Ibn Rushd, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Bajah, and Ibn Khaldun, the father of sociology and philosophy of history. Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history and society is the flowering of early work by Muslim thinkers in the spheres of ethics and political science such as those of Miskawayh, al-Dawwani, and Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. The credit for giving serious attention to socio-political philosophy goes to al-Farabi, who wrote books on these issues under the titles of Madinat al-fadilah, Ara' ahl al-madinat al-fadilah, al-Millah al-fadilah, Fusul al-madang, Sirah Fadilah, K. al-Siyasah al-madaniyyah, etc.

Muslims never ignored socio-political economic and other problems pertaining to the physical as well as social reality. They contributed richly to human civilization and thought by their bold and free inquiry in various areas of knowledge even at the risk of being condemned as heretics or rather unbelievers. True and firm believers in Islamic creed, like al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Bajah, al-Haytham, Ibn 'Arabi and Mulla Sadra, and in recent times Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Iqbal and al-Mawdudi were not spared fatwas of kufr by the partisans of blind imitation who were hostile to the principle of ijtihad, research and critical thought.

Along with the Muslim astronomers, mathematicians, natural scientists and physicians like Ibn Sina, Zakariyya al-Razi, and others who were instrumental in the development of human knowledge and civilization, it would be unjust not to mention the significant contribution of Ikhwan al-Safa (The Brethren Purity) a group of Shi'i-Ismaili scholars and thinkers who wrote original treatises on various philosophical and scientific subjects, an effort which signifies the first attempt to compile an encyclopedia in the civilized world.

In brief, it may be justifiably claimed that the Islamic theory of knowledge was responsible for blossoming of a culture of free inquiry and rational scientific thinking that also encompassed the spheres of both theory and practice.

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'Ashura:

Misrepresentations and Distortions Al-Tawhid

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Karbala', an Enduring Paradigm of Islamic Revivalism [1]

Sayyid Wahid Akhtar

Vol XIII No. 1 (Spring 1996)

The martyrdom of Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a) and his companions in Karbala' proved to be the beginning of the downfall of the Banu Umayyah dynasty which had usurped the Islamic khilafah by deceit, repression, and corruption of the Muslim community. Though the Imam ('a) was martyred with his family and companions, and apparently his murderers seemed to emerge winners from the conflict, it was the martyr of Karbala' who was the real victor. The mourning ceremonies that have been held through the last fourteen hundred years to commemorate this most significant event in the history of Islam are generally known as Muharram ceremonies, as they are held during the month of Muharram in remembrance of the 'Ashura' movement. This incident has its background whose elaborate details have been given by Muslim historians and I need not cite them here. Briefly, it may be said that Imam Husayn's revolt, staged against the tyranny, injustice, and repression of the regime and torture and execution of pious Muslims, which violated the Islamic concept of a just Islamic polity and society, was to uphold the ideals and values of Islam propounded in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (S), to rescue the higher human values, moral, social, political and spiritual, and to preserve the true spirit of Islam. It was basically aimed by the martyred Imam ('a) to rescue Islam as the message of the last Prophet, a message that had to endure, not only in the hearts and spirits of saints but on the plane of society, and he achieved his purpose most completely. The episode of Karbala' became the everlasting stage on which, more than anything else, the great spirit of an Imam of the Ahl al-Bayt was put for eternal display, not in mere words or traditions recorded in books, but against the background of the greatest tragedy in human history and scenes of love and loyalty, bravery and sacrifice, nobility and high spirituality, blood and battle, and also those of treachery and betrayal, human abasement and wretchedness, perversity and depravity. Due to his refusal to compromise with godlessness and tyranny, the Imam has been remembered as the very embodiment of tawhid, of la ilaha illallah, by all great Islamic mystics, thinkers, writers and poets. In the words of the great Indian Sufi of Iranian origin, Khwajah Mu'in-al-Din Chishti:

> He gave his life but wouldn't give his hand in the hand of Yazid (for allegiance, bay'ah)
> Verily Husayn is the foundation of la ilaha illallah [2]

Mahmoud Ayoub in his study of the devotional aspects of 'Ashura', Redemptive Suffering in Islam, justifiably interprets the Imam's message to Muslims as a call for enjoining good and prohibiting evil. In a will he made to Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah while departing from Makkah, the Imam declares:

> Indeed, I have not risen up to do mischief, neither as an adventurer, nor to cause corruption and tyranny. I have risen up solely to seek the reform of the Ummah of my grandfather (S). I want to command what is good and stop what is wrong, and (in this) I follow the conduct of my grandfather and my father, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

In a letter that he wrote to the people of Kufah, in a short sentence he outlines the Islamic concept of a worthy ruler:

> By my life, the leader is one who acts in accordance with the Scripture, upholds justice in society, conducts its affairs according to what is righteous, and dedicates his self to God. Was-salam.

Addressing Hurr ibn Yazid Riyahi and his troops, who had been dispatched by 'Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, the infamous governor of Kufah, to intercept the Imam's caravan on the way and to stop him from entering Kufah, Imam Husayn ('a) quotes this tradition of the Prophet (s), which states the duty of Muslims vis-a-vis corrupt and un-lslamic rulers:

> O people! Verily the Messenger of Allah (s) said: "Whoever observes a sovereign legalizing what God has made unlawful, violating the covenant of God, opposing the Sunnah of the Messenger of God, and treating the creatures of God sinfully and oppressively, and does not oppose him with his speech and action, God has a right to bring him to the same fate as that of the tyrant." Indeed, these people (i.e. Yazid and the ruling Umayyads) have committed themselves to the following of Satan, and abandoned obedience to God. They have given currency to corruption and abolished the Islamic laws, plundering the public treasury, making lawful what God has forbidden and forbidding what God has permitted. And I, of all people, have a greater right to act [in accordance with the Prophet's exhortation].

On reaching Karbala', a point where they had been forced to discontinue their journey and to disembark on the orders of Ibn Ziyad, the Imam stood up to address his companions. In that sermon he declares that life under tyranny is not worthy of man, unless the people rise in an attempt to restore the higher values.

> Don't you see that what is true and right is not acted upon and what is false and wrong is not forbidden? In such a situation, the man of faith yearns for the

meeting wit', his Lord. Indeed, (in such conditions) to me death is happiness, and life under the yoke of tyrants is disgrace.

Giving the details of Imam Husayn's refusal to accept a tyrannical and unjust ruler, starting from his journey from Madinah to Makkah and afterwards through its various stages until the Imam reached Karbala', the scene of his battle and martyrdom, historians refers to verses which are said to have been recited by the Imam on the night of the 10th of Muharram (the day of 'Ashura'):

O Time (dahr), fie on you of a friend.

How many are those you claim at the morn and eventide.

Many a friend, and many a one seeking revenge,

Yet Time is not satisfied with a substitute or proxy.

Truly judgement belongs to the Glorious One;

And every living soul takes the path [of death].

It is important to note that the Imam's address to Time inspired a number of Muslim thinkers to propound a new revolutionary concept of Time with reference to the Qur'anic verses in the Surat al-'Asr. The Imam did not actually vilify time, but he condemned the time-servers. Otherwise Time, as interpreted by Iqbal, the contemporary philosopher poet of the Indian subcontinent, is, in the light of the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions, an expression and manifestation of the continuing process of God's creativity as well as the creativity of the human being. While addressing Time, Imam Husayn ('a) indicated that man is not a time-server but time is at the service of man. He proved by his example that man has the power to turn the tide of time and he actually did it.

The tragedy of Karbala', which was in the words of Imam Khumayni the symbol of blood's triumph-the blood of the martyrs-over the sword, transformed not only the history of Islam but also human history for ever. Husayn ('a) initiated a movement that proved to be an archetype representing an eternal struggle of truth against falsehood, justice against injustice and tyranny, human dignity against dehumanization, the revolt of the oppressed against oppressors, and overpowering of the strong by society's weak. The unlslamic rule of the Umayyads was challenged after him by his followers and descendants, such as Zayd ibn 'Ali, Yahya ibn Zayd, and before them by Mukhtar al-Thaqafi and the Tawwabin, which created a ferment that finally resulted in the overthrow of the Umayyads and the coming to power of Banu 'Abbas, who deceitfully claimed to avenge the martyrdom of Husayn ('a) and to advocate his revolutionary mission.

However, this movement continued to be inspired by the message of 'Ashura' during the reign of the 'Abbasid caliphs and afterwards. The emergence of Shi'i Sufi movements, like those of the Sarbidaran, the Nuqtawis, and the Mar'ashis, as well as the Fatimi-lsmaiili sects, culminated in the victory of the Safawi Sufi order in Iran, who made it a point that the 'Ashura' movement should continue as an inspiring force and dynamic principle in Muslim polity and society. It were the Safawis during whose reign the 'Ashura' commemoration ceremonies took a particular shape.

The remembrance of the tragedy of Karbala' as a ritual did not remain confined to Iran and Iraq, but also influenced the socio-political and cultural life of Muslims in the Indian sub-continent. As a result of this, in India, particularly in Avadh, there developed a culture that was inspired by the spirit of 'Ashura' which was all-embracing. Other Muslim sects and even non- Muslims came under the cultural influence of this movement.

Unfortunately this movement, which represented a resurgence of the 'Ashura' culture in literature and other art forms, gradually degenerated in the course of time in Iran, Iraq, and the sub-continent, losing its revolutionary spirit. One of the greatest contributions of Imam Khumayni is that he recreated and revived the spirit of 'Ashura' through his messages against the despotic Pahlavi rule and the exploitive domination of alien powers over Muslims throughout the world. Some of his disciples and contemporaries have also contributed to this 'Ashura'ic resurgence of Islam, Shari'ati and Mutahhari in particular. Imam Khumayni and other champions of the revolutionary ideology of Islam in Iran made use of the traditional ritual 'Ashura' ceremonies to reach the common Muslim masses for effectively conveying their message to the grassroots of the Muslim society.

There have been various attempts in the Muslim world to reinterpret and reconstruct Islamic ideology to meet the challenges of time. Ghazali demolished what was in his view unlslamic in the ideas of Muslim philosophers; Jamaluddin Asadabadi, popularly known as Afghani, emphasized the importance of ijtihad and propagated a pan-lslamic ideology; his followers in Egypt and the Arab world, particularly Muhammad 'Abduh, Rashid Rida' and others, revived the practice of ijtihad in the Sunni world. Before them, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah had made attempts to awaken Muslims to the needs of the time and revive the Islamic spirit. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Iqbal tried to reconstruct Islamic beliefs according to the challenges of the time and the ascendant supremacy of science and Western philosophy. In the words of Iqbal, all the earlier Muslim thinkers had failed in their mission because they destroyed the prevalent philosophies but could not reconstruct Islamic ideas on a secure ground, and they failed to influence the Muslim society in general.

This failure, in my view, is due to these thinkers' inability to reach the Muslim masses and convey their message to them in a popular idiom. The success of Imam Khumayni and the other ideologues of revolutionary Iran found the popular platform of the Muharram

ceremonies as a convenient weapon against the repressive Pahlavi rulers, imperialism and Western domination, particularly the exploitive American dominance of the East, to awaken Muslim masses and revive in them the spirit of martyrdom inspired by the episode of Karbala'. Because of this they succeeded in their movement, while others had failed to achieve the desired end.

Imam Khumayni not only rekindled the flame hidden in the hearts of the pupils of 'Ashura' culture, but also vehemently criticized the so-called 'ulama' and fuqaha' who, as time-servers, interpreted Islam and Islamic laws according to the convenience of the rulers and the exploiting class.

One who makes a study of al-Kawthar, a selection in two volumes of the speeches of Imam Khumayni, as well his writings on the Islamic government, in particular his lectures on wilayat-e faqih, one would be surprised to find that the most vehement criticism of Muslim clerics, Shi'i and Sunni, was made by a Muslim scholar. It was because Imam Khumayni understood profoundly the spirit of the 'Ashura' movement and was angry that the so-called 'ulama' and rawdeh-khwans had transformed its true spirit into a mere ritual of lamentation over the martyrdom of Husayn ('a) and his companions, making it a regular means of their livelihood. He criticized and condemned these persons and rejuvenated the true spirit of 'Ashura' among the Muslim masses, who were sincerely devoted to Muharram ceremonies. These ceremonies provided him with the most effective weapon to propagate his message based on the Islamic values of justice and truth. Had there been no such platform to reach the masses, he might have also failed in his attempt to revive true Islamic values and reawaken the Muslim masses. It was here that the secret of his success lay. The important milestones of his movement could not have been covered without taking recourse to 'Ashura'.

The tragic event of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) at Karbala' deeply influenced the tide of time in various ways, in the fields of philosophy, kalam, political thought, social reform, and cultural resurgence of the Muslim world. In India (and also Pakistan and Bangladesh), a culture developed that was inspired and motivated by the 'Ashura' movement. Even during the period of Muslim decadence that culture has, in the words of Iqbal, produced the cream of Muslim poetry and literature in the form of the elegies (marathi) in Urdu, which have exercised a great influence on the Indo-Muslim culture, an influence that extended to non-Muslim communities as well. Presently one can find the influence of the 'Ashura' movement in this region even in non-Muslim literature and culture. Even in the so-called progressive (Marxist and modern) literature, particularly poetry, one can find Karbala' and 'Ashura' used as metaphors to depict the present reality. All these aspects may be elaborated in the form of a lengthy article or even a book, but here, for the purpose of brevity, I would abstain from going into details.

Of course, there emerged some movements in the Muslim world inspired by the 'Ashura', but could not leave a lasting effect and died away after a short time. Imam Khumayni's success in bringing about the Islamic Revolution in Iran and, through it, influencing the entire Muslims

world, lies in the fact that he made the 'Ashura' movement the prime mover of a continuing process in human history for evolving a better society that could safeguard the principles of justice, social equity, and the cultural independence of the East. The impact of the 'Ashura' movement on Muslim polity and culture and its role in changing and moulding the history of Islam and the world may be discussed in detail under various heads such as: its impact on Muslim theology ('ilm al-kalam), mysticism, and philosophy, its impact on socio-economic reforms in the Muslim world, its impact on political upheavals in the Muslim world, and its impact on culture, literature, fine arts and other creative expressions of Muslim ethos. Imam Khumayni played the most influential role in our times in translating the revolutionary and creative potential of this movement into reality through his writings, speeches, leadership, and his reinterpretation of the fundamental principle of "enjoining good and prohibiting evil."

It is necessary to elaborate certain significant aspects of the commemoration ceremonies of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a). Generally these ceremonies are viewed from two angles: one is the spiritual, pietistic angle that considers them a means of catharsis and redemption; the other is the socio-political approach that regards it as instrumental in the realization of the Islamic ideals for which the great sacrifice (dibh-e 'azim) was made.

The former approach, which treats the 'Ashura' rituals from a pietistic angle, gives importance to mourning, lamenting, breasting beating in remembrance of the mazlum Imam and considers sorrow as the means of participating in the sufferings of the Imam ('a), his family, and companions. This approach is supported by the traditions of the Imams ('a) of the Prophet's Family. There are traditions that emphasize that the tragedy of Karbala' was predestined and all prophets of God from Adam to the Seal of the Prophets (S) had been informed of the sacrifice of Husayn ('a) through Gabrael in advance. They themselves mourned and made it obigatory for all believers to mourn and be sorrowful in the remembrance of this great tragedy. Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a), the bereaved mother of Husayn ('a), is believed to be the host of the mourning observances, and she is the main addressee of all expressions of sorrow and the condolences that are offered, in this world as well as the other world, and, it believed, she will intercede in favour of her son's mourners on the Day of Judgement.

Authentic traditions record that Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al- 'Abidin ('a) mourned his father and his companions throughout his life after Karbala'. He was present at the site of the tragedy and witnessed all the sufferings of his father. Moreover, he had to shoulder the responsibility of taking care of the womenfolk and children of his family after 'Ashura' and he passed through the tribulations of the journey of the captive family of the Prophet (S) from Karbala' to Kufah and from Kufah to Damascus, putting up with all the humiliation with exemplary equanimity, patience, and firmness of character. He is regarded by the Sufis as one of their early great masters, who also emphasized the value of God's fear and sorrow for the sake of purifying the heart and soul. His collection of supplications, known as al-Sahifat al-Sajjadiyyah or al-Sahifat al-kamilah, is a valuable source of ma'rifah and high spirituality.

The other great mourner of Karbala' was Imam Husayn's sister, Zaynab, known as "Zaynab-e Kubra" and "Thani-e Zahra" (i.e. the Second Fatimah). She bore the martyrdom of her two young sons, 'Awn and Muhammad, without shedding a tear, but was the first to mourn her brother. After the episode of Karbala', Imam Sajjad and Zaynab made continuous efforts to create the institution of mourning for the martyred Imam as a vehicle for the revolutionary message of Islam against perverse socio-political conditions that negated the Islamic ideal of a healthy society ruled by committed and competent leaders. The institution of mourning over Imam Husayn became a vehicle for the propagation of almost everything that Islam stood for. It was not the martyrdom of an ordinary moral, no matter however pious or saintly. It was the martyrdom of an Infallible Imam and the greatest wali and vicegerent of God and the God-appointed heir to the Prophet's authority and spirituality. To those who understood the sublime spiritual station of Husayn ibn 'Ali it was as if the Prophet himself had been martyred at Karbala'. And what greater calamity could be imagined? As the martyred Imam represented the highest embodiment of Islam, his martyrdom was the greatest crime that could be perpetrated against Islam and God.

As we know, the chiefs and elders of Quraysh had conspired to murder the Prophet (S) on the night of his migration to Madinah. Acting out a plan aimed to mislead the waiting assassins, 'Ali ibn Abl Talib slept on the Prophet's bed that night, while the Prophet (S) left the town. Later, for a decade, the Quraysh, led by Banu Umayyah, and in particular Abu Sufyan, unrelenting in their hostility against Islam and its prophet, made repeated attempts to annihilate the Muslim community in Madinah, which formed the nucleus of the expanding revolutionary creed. When these attempts did not succeed, they joined the fold of Islam, and this time all their efforts were aimed to recapture the supremacy they had lost due to the Prophet's movement and to destroy Islam from within. The martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions at Karbala' was viewed by Banu Umayyah as a great victory in the course of a long struggle against Islam and its prophet. Their sense of triumph is reflect in the following verses of Ibn al-Ziba'ra that Yazid is reported by historians to have recited when, after the battle Karbala', Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ('a) and the women and children of the Prophet's family were brought as captives into his court at Damascus:

Alas! Had only my elders that were slain at Badr,

seen the torments of Khazraj by the edge of the sword.

They would have cried 'hurra!' and given cries of joy,

and said: Bravo, O Yazid, for what you have done!

We have killed the elect of their chiefs,

avenging by his death, the viclims of Badr.

The clan of Hashim dallied with kingdom,

and there was neither any revelations nor any news from the heavens.

I am not of Khindif should I fail to take revenge,

from the family of Ahmad for what they have done.

As can be seen, the vengeful spirit that pervades these verses is one that characterized the pagan Arab tribes of the Jahiliyyah. It is a base spirit that still wallows in the loyalties and attachments of a barbaric tribal society that is a stranger to the message of Islam of a universal creed based on higher moral and spiritual values.

Besides mourning for the martyrs, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ('a), Zaynab ('a) and her younger sister, Umm KulthEm, made very forceful orations describing the sufferings of 'Ashura' and its aftermath that moved the listeners to tears. These orations and elegies composed by Zaynab ('a) and 'Umm Kulthum ('a) extempore exercised great influence on the Muslims and were instrumental in propagating the message of 'Ashura' and the message of Imam Husayn's sacrifice. These may be taken as the early foundations of the 'Ashura' movement and beginnings of the mourning ceremonies.

There are equally authentic traditions of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) and Imam 'Ali al-Rida ('a) exhorting their followers regarding the observance of mourning in remembrance of Imam Husayn ('a) and his companions as a means of redemption. In traditions ascribed to the Prophet (S), Fatimah ('a) and the Imams ('a) of the Prophet's family there is another significant aspect to be taken note of. A recurring theme that characterizes them is that not only the prophets and the angles mourned the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions, but also the whole cosmos mourned this tragedy. Strong winds began to blow on that tenth of Muharram and when the Imam was beheaded after he fell in the field of battle, there arose tides in rivers and oceans as if they would flood the entire earth, the stars collided, the sun was eclipsed, mountains moved from their places and the seven heavens rained blood, as blood gushed forth from the ground. Such descriptions of the effect of Imam Husayn's martyrdom on the whole order of being persuade his devotees to participate in a mourning ritual that encompasses all the natural and supranatural realms. If not taken literally, these traditions may be treated as metaphorical expressions of a tragedy possessing cosmic dimensions. There is no doubt that these traditions served as the source of inspiration for the devotees and made them feel one with the whole universe and its purpose.

Later, when ta'ziyyah, majalis and rawdah khwani became popular rituals among the Shi'ah, sufis, and some other Muslim sects, gradually more and more such descriptions were improvised and many events that never occurred were intertwined with the historically

recorded events and authentic traditions of the Imams ('a). This was done sometimes intentionally and sometimes due to ignorance by rawdah khwans, zakirs and poets. In poetry there might be some justification for the flights of imagination at the pretext of poetic license, but in written prose works such mixing of myth with history and attributing inauthentic or totally false traditions to the Imams ('a) is unpardonable. This practice was started by some professional rawdah writers with a view to gaining popularity among naive audiences by touching their most sensitive chords to make them weep. Mulla Wa'iz Kashifi, the author of Rawdat al-shuhada, is severely criticized by Muhaddith Nuri in Lu'lu' wa al-marjan, and by Mutahhari in H'amaseh-ye Husayni. Muhaddith Nuri devotes the major part of his book to describing how sinful it is to attribute some sayings or occurrences that have no authentic basis.

Imam Khumayni at the risk of losing popularity among the naive and inviting wrath of professional akhands all over the Muslim world boldly restrained the devotees from unnecessarily shedding their blood during mourning ceremonies and advised them to donate their blood for the cause of defending the Islamic revolution. He also transformed the concept of intizar, waiting for the appearance of the Twelfth Imam ('a), from a passive state of waiting into active adherence to the Islamic principle of amr b'il-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an'il-munkar. This injunction was aimed to give to the participation of mourners in the ceremonies a consciousness of the relevance of the ongoing socio-political struggle of Islam and the Muslim world against imperialism and oppressors by following the example of Imam Husayn ('a). Thus he successfully synthesized the ritual mourning with social action. He did not disapprove of mourning, but rather encouraged it with a view to making it the main source of a revolution.

Every religion and culture has its own myths along with its history and set of beliefs or ideology. The myths woven together with historical facts create the ethos and milliue of the popular Shi'i psyche. The ta'ziyah and majalis provided a basis for the integration of the entire cosmos into the community of Imam Husayn's devotees. They served as a perpetual instrument of keeping alive the memory of the tragedy of Karbala' by all possible means.

The other approach which made use of 'Ashura' as a vehicle of social and political action may be reconciled with the spiritual and ritual view of the sufferings of Imam Husayn (a) in a creative and innovative way. The Shi'i ethos is dominated by an urge to relive the sufferings of the Holy Family ('a) every year. The Shi'ah re-enact the sufferings of Husayn ('a) and his family with renewed vigour year after year. In this enactment of reliving 'Ashura', men and women, young and old, all participate with a unique sense of commitment and devotion. Thus the 'Ashura' sufferings have come to occupy the very core of their own individual existential experience. That is why poetry inspired by this interiorized subjective experience becomes a genuine and authentic expression of collective human suffering and attains universal validity. For the mourners of Imam Husayn ('a), 'Ashura' is the "Eternal Now." This experience occurs in a pure and real space time continuum, a duration that is eternity. It transcends serial mathematical time of day-to-day life and renders meaning and purpose to human existence.

This experience prompts every member of the community of Husayn's devotees to participate in jihad and a holy struggle against untruth, injustice and all forms of repression and exploitation of the weak (mustad'ifin) by the oppressors (mustakbirin). This Qur'anic terminology was for the first time used in historical and modern context by Imam Khumayni and was further popularized by 'Ali Shari'ati. Mahmoud Ayoub, in Redemptive Suffering in Islam, says. "No one can deny the far-reaching significance of the main rituals (i.e. five daily prayers, fasting of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage ritual of hajj) to the entire Muslim community. But we wish to argue here that the special rituals of the Shi'ah community, the rituals of ta'ziyah and ziyarah, present an intensity of feeling and a total encompassing of space and time unparalleled in the general piety of the Sunni Islam". (p. 277) As mentioned earlier these rituals, which acquired prevalence during the reign of the Al-e Buwayh and found specific forms during the Safawi regime, continued to inspire and stimulate the Shi'i psyche for a long time, despite Shari'ati's claim that the Safawis exploited Shi'i sentiments for capturing power and were later responsible for rendering the mourning rituals soulless formalities. Shari'ati is justified in criticism of the Safawis to an extent, but his view that Iranians adopted many elements of the paraphernalia of the rituals by borrowing from Christian passion rituals during this period as a result of diplomatic and cultural contacts with the West, is controvertible. It is not yet established that the Shi'ah did not make use of certain symbols of mourning such as the 'alam, dari', the coffin etc. before coming into contact with the West. It may be conjectured contrarily as well that the Christians borrowed the idea of passion plays during crusades from the Shi'i 'Ashura' rituals of Aleppo and other Syrian towns. Whatever may be the case, the rituals played a vital role in the Shi'i milieu and psyche.

Rituals are essential elements in every religion, but during the periods of decline of a community they are taken as substitutes for the true spirit of a faith and religion is reduced to mere ritualism. Shari'ati called the ritualized form of Shi'i faith tashayyu'-e siyah ('black-clad Shi'ism,' that is, a Shi'ism given to passive mourning) as against the true Shi'i creed which he called tashayyu'-e surkh ('red Shi'ism,' the red colour symbolizing blood, sacrifice, struggle and martyrdom), which stands for active struggle against all that is untrue and unjust. Shari'ati and Murtada Mutahhari used the 'Ashura' idiom for awakening and arousing Iranians to the political relevance of Muharram ceremonies, paving through their speeches and writings the ground for the overthrow of the vicious Pahlavi regime.

But the main inspiration came from Imam Khumayni's interpretation of the true spirit of Karbala', which in his view, is not a battle limited to any particular period of time but a continuing struggle in the "Eternal Now." By the means of Muharram ceremonies he revitalized and re-energized the downtrodden Muslims to fight courageously, fearlessly, and selflessly unarmed against the most heavily armed regimes in the region which enjoyed total support of a superpower like the US. He brought about a metamorphosis of the Iranian ethos and, as a result, there emerged from the fire of Phoenix a revolutionary nation of free men and women.

Freedom is at the core of Imam Husayn's message. The Imam fought for freedom of all humanity from hunger, poverty, tyranny, exploitation and injustice. He chose death for himself as a free being and by choosing death he chose God and His Will. In his speech delivered before his journey to Iraq he spoke of his choice in the following words:

> O God, You knows that we did not seek, in what we have done, acquisition of power, or ephemeral possessions. Rather, we seek to manifest the truths of Your religion and establish righteousness in Your lands, so that the wronged among Your servants may be vindicated, and that men may abide by the duties (fara'id), laws (sunan) and Your ordinances (ahkam).

Imam Husayn ('a) recited some verses in answer to Farazdaq, whom he met soon after he started on his journey from Makkah, when he was informed by the poet that while the hearts of the Kufis were with the Imam (a), their swords were with Banu Umayyah. The gist of these verses is that "If bodies be made for death, then the death of a man by the sword in the way of God is the best choice." The choice of violent death in the way of God was not a better choice only in the eyes of the Imam ('a), but all men among his relatives and his companions chose death in the way of god of their own free will. Death was not forced on the them by the choice of Imam Husayn ('a) either, rather, several times, particularly on the night of tenth Muharram, the Imam advised and persuaded them to leave him alone with the enemy. The old and the young among his family members and companions declared that death in the way of God was a better choice in their view. The Imam ('a) blessed them with eternal freedom for their free choice. The responses of Muslim ibn 'Awsajah, 'Abbas ibn 'Ali, 'Ali Akbar ibn al-Husayn, al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan and others brought tears to the eyes of the Imam ('a). Not only men but the womenfolk of his family and those accompanying his companions offered their loyalty and exhorted their husbands and sons to make their own free choice for sacrificing their lives. They encouraged their men to welcome death on the day of 'Ashura'.

Women played a very important role in the 'Ashura' movement of the Imam ('a), highlighting the role and freedom that Islam has bestowed upon them. Imam Khumayni was perhaps the first religious leader to have successfully brought women into the active ranks of his movement for the freedom of Muslims in particular and the oppressed people of the world in general. Hence it would not be an exaggeration to say that the spirit of Ashura' was re-incarnated in him.

Notes:

[1] Dr. S. Wahid Akhtar, formerly Professor and Chairman, Dept. of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, presented the paper at the conference on Imam Khumayni wa Farhange Ashura, (Imam Khumayni and the culture of Ashura), held on June 1-2, 1995 at Tehran.

[2] There is no god save God, i.e the spirit of rejection of all worldly powers that stand in the ways of man's submission to God.

INDEX

History and Human Evolution

(Lecture I of II)

Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from Persian by Dr. 'Ali'uddin Pasargadi

The subject of our discussion is the meaning of evolution in history, or in other words, man's social evolution and progress. Men of science assume two types of evolution for man: one of which is biological evolution, about which you may have read in biology and know that man is considered as the most perfect animal and the last link in the natural evolution of animals. The meaning of biological evolution is clear: it is an evolution that the process of nature has produced without the intervention of man himself and without his asking for it. In this respect there is no difference between man and other animals; since every animal has reached a stage of evolution by a natural and coercive process. The same process has brought man to the stage that we call him a human being, and consider him a specific kind of species as distinct from other species.

But the historical or social evolution means a new process of evolution in which nature does not play the role it played in man's biological evolution. This evolution is an acquired one, namely, an evolution that man has secured by his own effort, and in every period has transferred it to the next generation through teaching and learning, and not through heredity. The biological evolution has taken place without man's will power and initiative, and has been achieved through a series of laws of heredity. But the social or historical evolution, being acquired by man's effort, has not been handed down from one generation to another, or from zone to zone through heredity, and there is not even a possibility of its being such. It has been accomplished through education, teaching and learning, and primarily through the art of writing. We see that the Quran swears in the name of the pen and tools of writing1, and addresses the Prophet thus: "Read in the name of your God, Who created man from clotted blood. Read, and your God is the most exalted; He, who taught with the pen."2 This means that God taught man how to use the pen; that is, He granted him the power to make progress in his historical and social evolution.

There is no doubt that human society since its origin, that is, since civilization first began to appear, has continuously progressed and evolved. We all know that like the biological

evolution, social evolution, too, has been gradual, with one difference, and that is, with the passage of time the rate of evolution has increased in speed; in other words, it has followed a course of acceleration. It has moved on and on and has not been stationary, and the motion, too, has not been a fixed one. A car may move at a fixed speed of a hundred kilometers for several hours; but a speed with an acceleration means a gradual increase of speed in which the speed increases every minute.

But although evolution and progress seem an obvious matter, you may be surprised that there have been learned men who have doubted whether what has happened can be called progress or evolution. One may wonder that there should be any room for doubt in this matter. But the reason why they have expressed doubt about it will be discussed later on. Here, it is sufficient to say that although we do not consider their doubt justified and we believe that human society has continued its course of an all-round evolution and is approaching its final phase, at the same time their doubts are not quite without foundation. Nevertheless, we must clarify the cause for this doubt in order to be able to fully understand the meaning of evolution.

What is Evolution?

We must first define evolution. Many matters seem at first so obvious as to require no definition. But when one tries to define them, he finds it very hard and is faced with difficulties. I have no intention of quoting all the definitions which philosophers have given for evolution. There is a fine point in Islamic philosophy which is subject to argument from the viewpoint of the Quran, and that is the difference between "complete" and "perfect". We use the word "complete" as the antonym of "defective", and again we use "perfect" as the antonym of the same word "defective". But does "complete" mean "perfect"? No. There is a verse in the Quran which is related to the question of Imamah and wilayah. It says: "Now We made your religion perfect, and completed Our blessings on you and were content for Islam to be your religion." (Quran, 5:3)

This shows that the Quran attributes two meanings to "perfection" and "completeness". The blessings were completed from a defective state, and religion was perfected from a defective condition. But before explaining the difference between the two words, let me first explain the difference between evolution and progress, and then return to this matter.

Is progress the same as evolution, and is evolution identical with progress? They happen to have a difference and you may consider their usage. We sometimes speak of a sickness which is progressing, but we do not say it is evolving. If an army which is fighting in a land occupies a part of it, we say that the army is advancing, but we do not say that it is evolving. Why not? Because there is a sense of exaltation in evolution: evolution is an upward movement, a vertical movement, from a lower level to a higher plane. But progress and advance is always on a horizontal level. When an army has occupied a territory and added some land to its own possessions, we say that it has advanced, which means that it has moved ahead but on the

same plane that it had before. Why do we not say that it has evolved? Because, there is the idea of exaltation in evolution. So, when we speak of social evolution, it means man's social exaltation and not just progress. Many things may be considered progress for man and society without being evolution and exaltation for the human society. We say this to show that if some scholars have expressed doubts about such progress' worthiness to be called an evolution, their view is not without foundation. Although we do not confirm their view, yet what they have stated is not entirely pointless. Therefore, there is a difference between evolution on the one hand and progress and development on the other; for progress and development are almost similar in meaning.

But the difference between perfect and complete can be explained in this fashion: If something consists of a number of parts, such as a building or a car, as long as all the necessary parts do not exist in it, we say that it is imperfect. But when we place the last part in it, then we can say that it is "complete". In comparison, evolution has many phases and stages. When a child is born with some defect in his limbs, we consider him defective; but even when he is born with all his limbs complete, it is still considered defective from another point of view; he must pass through many stages of evolution in his education which are for him a form of exaltation and ascension by degrees and steps. So far our discussion was about the definition of evolution in the social and biological sense. But now we deal with other matters in this connection, the most important of which may be stated in three questions:

1. Has man, in his social life and throughout history, achieved evolution and exaltation?

2. Is human society undergoing evolution and will reach a fully evolved state in future?

3. If it is undergoing evolution, what is that ideal society, or, as Plato would say, that utopia of man, and what are its peculiarities?

We can understand the course of history up to the present; but what about the future? Should we close our eyes about the future and say that history inevitably moves on an evolutionary course? Is evolution in nature imposed by time? Is the ship of time voyaging on an evolutionary course without the slightest intervention of man and without any responsibility on his part? Have human beings in the past had no role as beings endowed with free will, freedom of choice and responsibility? Has the role of human beings in the past been secondary and subject to determinism or if there has been no such determining force in the past?

Human beings, by their own free will and choice and their own initiative and planning of their society, have determined an evolutionary course for their society, and have advanced it. This matter of free will and freedom of human beings in the past, should not be forgotten. Therefore, a group of men are worthy of praise and admiration, and they are those who had the choice to stand against historical evolution, or deprive it of their support, and prefer their

personal welfare to the struggle for the sake of progress. But they chose the other way, and freely, by their own choice, followed the way of evolution, and sacrificed themselves. Similarly other human beings should be reproached and even cursed for posing hindrances in the way of this evolution.

If we do not recognize the future and have no plan for it, and if we pay no attention to our responsibility for making history, we too deserve being reproached by future generations. History is made by man, and not man by history. If we have no plan for the future, and do not realize our responsibility for the future of history, no one can promise us that this ship will reach its destination automatically. The least that can be said is that it may either go ahead or turn backwards. This matter of ability to advance or reverse the course of events, the idea that there isn't a blind coercive force that drives events ahead, is in Islam, and especially in Shi'ism, a question, which from a sociological viewpoint (as I have explained in my book, Man and Destiny), may be considered one of the most sublime of Islamic teachings.

The Problem of Bada' (Revision)

In Islam there is an issue called bada' (revision). The concept of bada' has an apparent meaning which few would regard as acceptable. Some have even criticized the Shi'ah for believing in bada'. The meaning of bada' is revision in Divine Destiny (qada'), meaning that God has not fixed a definite and final form for the course of human history. In other words, God says to man: "You yourselves are in charge of the fulfilment of Divine Destiny, and it is you who can advance, stop or reverse the course of history." There is no blind determinism either on the part of nature or the means of life or from the viewpoint of Divine Destiny, to rule over history. This is one way of looking at man, his history and destiny.

Therefore, as long as we do not understand the direction of evolution and man's ultimate goal, we cannot speak of evolution and merely state that man is progressing; for then, immediately, the question arises: towards what? If we cannot answer this question, what right do we have to speak of evolution? Don't we study history in order to open a way for the future? If by studying history we get only so far as to allow it to introduce itself without showing a way for the future, what is the use of history? But we see that the Quran surveys history in a way to show us the path for the future, and this is how it should be. Therefore, our discussion is related to the past up to the present, and then the future. The question of our duty and responsibility is determinable only when, after becoming familiar with the past, we gain an understanding of the future too.

The Evolution of History in the Past

If we regard history from two points of view, there has been indubitable progress of man, if not an evolution. One of them is in the matter of tools and implements of life. Man has certainly made progress in making tools, and, of course, an amazing progress it has been.

Once his tools consisted of unhewed stone, which later on was hewed and polished. Today he has attained the present advanced state of technology, craft and industry. Man has not only advanced in technical skills and achieved stunning progress in production of tools, but he has made such a marvellous progress that if our predecessors and philosophers of a hundred or two hundred years ago had been told that man would advance so much in a hundred years time, as he has today, no one would have believed it. You may call it whatever you like, either "progress" or "evolution", there can be no doubt that man has made tremendous progress in making tools, and it may be expected to continue in future too, on condition, however, that it is not, checked by a historic catastrophe, a calamity which is again predicted by some men of learning. They consider it probable that man's technical and industrial progress will reach a point when man may destroy himself and all his achievements in science and technology, his books, his learning and civilization and all its vestiges. A new type of human being may appear to start life from the beginning. If no such catastrophe occurs, there is no doubt that the creation of tools may further advance to a stage which may not be imaginable today. This evolution is produced by the evolution of man's experience and his knowledge, for man has made so much progress in his experimental understanding and knowledge of nature that he has been able to conquer nature and turn it into a docile servant. This was one aspect of human progress.

Another aspect of man's evolution (which again may hardly be called "evolution") is in the relations of social life and the structure of society (by "relations" here is not meant human relationships). Human society has gradually been transformed from a simple one into a complex structure. In other words, in the same way as he has advanced in technical and industrial matters from the simple cars of yesterday to the present day aircrafts and sophisticated spacecrafts, in the same way as in natural evolution a unicellular organism is so simple as compared with an animal like man in bodily structure, human society, too, has changed from a simple to an extremely complex structure.

Some have defined evolution as a process involving two stages: at first, there is an accumulation, that is, a multiplication of parts followed by division, characterized by a movement from homogeneity towards heterogeneity, or, in other words, movement towards organization between parts and organs interconnected by a unifying relationship. For example, we know that in the process of fertilization, a cell which is formed by the combination of male sperm and female ovum has a simple form at first; then it begins the process of division (accumulation); one cell divides into two, the two into four, the four into eight, the eight into sixteen, and this division goes on. But it is only a question of quantity until a stage is reached when there takes place another form of division; this is, one part becomes the nervous system, another emerges as the heart and system of blood circulation, and so on, and all these organs are interrelated forming an organized unity which is the human body. In this respect, human society, too, has progressed, whether you may choose to call it 'evolution' or not. That is, the structure of human society has changed from a simple state into something complex. The structure of primitive and tribal societies was very simple. Someone was the chief of a tribe consisting of a number of people, and the chief divided the tasks

between them, and these tasks were few in number. But you see that with the progress of science and technology, such division of work has become complicated because there are more tasks and more people to perform them. Compare the existing variety of jobs, tasks, professions and crafts of modern day with those of the societies of a hundred years ago. Or look at the degree of specialization at the administrative and scientific levels. In the past, a man was able to master all the sciences of his own time. He could become an Aristotle or an Ibn Sina. But now the system of education has undergone such subdivisions, that we have hundreds of the like of Aristotle and Ibn Sina, each a specialist in his own field, who are not the least acquainted with other branches of science and quite unaware of even their existence in the world. This is a characteristic of our time, a quality that removes uniformity and homogeneity from among human beings and replaces it with differences and distinctions. For, as man creates work, work too builds up man. As a result, although all are human beings living in one society, but they seem to possess different natures, since everyone is dealing with a task which is unknown to another who is engaged in another task. Every one of them seems to live in a different world of his own. The result is that human beings vary from one another. If we speak of progress or evolution in connection with society and its organization and division of labour, skills and talents, again the structure of human society has changed from a simple into a complex and extremely entangled one.

You may, from these remarks, realize that if things go on in this fashion, there is a danger of the creation of so many differences that the unity of mankind will be threatened; that is, human beings will resemble one another only in appearance, but their mental, spiritual, emotional and educational structures will be totally different from one another; and this is a great danger for humanity. That is why it is said that technological progress has alienated man from himself, and made him a stranger to himself. It has turned man into a creature styled and tailored to the needs of his job and profession, and destroyed human unity. This is in itself a serious problem. In any case, we may say that from the viewpoint of social structure too, societies have evolved in the past. However, here, in addition to the problem of power and domination over nature and besides the structure of human society and social organizations, there are a number of other problems which are related to human nature, and that is the relationship of individuals with one another.

Human Relationships

Has man made progress in the quality of relationships of human beings with one another in the same way as he has made progress in the creation of tools, and in the complexity of social structure? If he has, then we may call it evolution and exaltation. Have human beings progressed in the sense of co-operation? Does a human being of today feel more co-operative towards others than in the past? Has he made a proportionate advance in the sense of responsibility towards other human beings? Has man's exploitation of other human beings been really effaced? Or is it that only its form has been altered and that it has increased in degree? Has man's aggression against the rights of others diminished? Have human relations improved in proportion to the advances made in building tools and with the complexity of

social structure? Or have these problems remained the same as before? Or there may be some who claim that not only no progress has been made in this connection, but also there has even been a retrogression? In other words, can it be said in general that human values, and everything that is the criterion of the humanity of man, have advanced proportionately?

Different views have been expressed in this connection; some cynically deny it totally that man has made any progress whatsoever in this respect, for, they say, if the criterion of progress is welfare and happiness, we may hardly call it progress. For example, even in the case of tools, it is doubted whether they have provided man with welfare. As an example, speed is one of the things which has greatly advanced as exhibited by the telephone, airplane and other such things. But can this improvement in speed be called progress when measured by the criterion of human welfare? Or, since speed is a means, it has produced comfort in one respect, in other respects it has deprived man of welfare: it carries a good man promptly to his destination, but it also carries a wicked man as quickly to his goal and as promptly in his evil purpose. A sound and honest man has found stronger hands and quicker legs. A wicked man, too, has the same advantages. These means have made possible the transfer of a criminal from one part of the world to another part in a few hours, to kill thousands or even millions of people at once. What, then, is the final conclusion? Though I am not in favour of this cynicism, yet I wish to explain why it has been expressed by some. For example, is the progress in medicine a true progress? In appearance, it is, for I see that when a child suffers from diphtheria, right drugs and proper medical treatment are readily available. This is progress. But some people like Alexis Carl who measure these things with the criterion of humanity, believe that medicine is gradually weakening human species. They say: In the past, human beings had resistance against diseases; the weak were destroyed and the strong remained alive, and this made successive generations stronger and resistant to diseases, and also prevented the unnecessary increase of population. But now, medicine is artificially preserving weak persons who otherwise would have perished and were really condemned to death by nature. Therefore, the successive generations are not fit to survive, and so every generation becomes weaker than its predecessor. A child born in the seventh month of pregnancy is by the law of nature condemned to death; but now medicine, with its progress and means, preserves this baby. But what will become of the next generation? Moreover, there is the question of over-population. It happens that those who are fitter for the improvement of the human race are destroyed and those who are not competent to bring about this improvement somehow manage to survive. This is the reason for doubt in this matter.

Another Example

In connection with the mass media, one may think it wonderful to sit in a corner and at the right moment hear the news in which he is interested. But remember that this same thing creates so much anxiety and worry for human beings; for, in many matters, it is more advisable for man not to hear such news. For instance, in the past the people who lived in Shiraz were unaware of the flood which overran Ghuchan, drowning so many people and making others homeless. But now they learn of it immediately and feel sad and anxious.

There are thousands of such unpleasant happenings occurring in various parts of the world.

It was from the viewpoint of human welfare, and welfare as a criterion that learned men have doubted whether to regard speed as a measure of progress and evolution or not. However, we have nothing to do with these problems, for as we believe, there is ultimately an evolution and all these difficulties may be overcome-a subject which we will discuss later. Thus, in the question of human relationships, we cannot say that any progress or evolution has taken place, or, even if it has occurred, it is not proportionate to the progress made in making tools and to the growth in social organization.

The Relation of Man with Himself

Another question is the relation of man with himself, which is termed 'ethics'. If we do not say that all the happiness of man lies in the establishment of a good relationship with oneself-and we do not say so because it would be an exaggeration-yet we may say that if the means of man's happiness are compared with one another to find a percentage of role of every factor, a greater part of human happiness would be found to lie in the relation of man with himself, or with his "self": the relationship of man with his animal aspect. For, man, in spite of his humanness and the human values inherent in his nature, is also an animal; that is, he is an animal on which humanity has been imposed. In other words, he is an animal, which, by the side of his animality, also possesses humanity.

The question arises here whether the humanity of man is subordinate to his animal side, or if his animality is subservient to his humanity. The Quran says:

He who purifies the soul indeed attains deliverance, and one who corrupts it certainly fails (91:9-10)

The problem here is of self-purification, which means not being captivated by greed and concupiscence of the self, and not being in the clutches of one's base animal characteristics. As long as man has not evolved ethically and has not attained internal emancipation from his own animality, it is not possible for him to establish good relations with other human beings. Good human relations can come into existence when man liberates himself from the captivity of other human beings, and is also able to abstain from subjugating other human beings to himself.

So far we have discussed four points:

1. The relation of man with nature, in which he has made progress.

2. The relation of man with his society, which has progressed from the viewpoint of social structure and organization.

3. The relation of man with other human beings, and the quality of his relations with other members of his kind, which depends again on his spirituality and is linked with the substance of his humanity. In this matter there is doubt as to whether he has made progress or not: that his progress in this sphere has not been on a par with other aspects is beyond doubt; the real question is whether he has made any progress at all.

4. The relation of man with himself, which is the subject of ethics.

The Role of Prophets and religion on the Historical Evolution

Has man of today overcome his animality more than his ancestors in the past, and have the higher human values been realized in his existence? Or, has the quality of human existence been better in the past? The role of the prophets in the historical evolution, their role in the past and in the future, becomes clear in this connection. Here we can discover the role of religion in the past and thereby find out its role in the future, and on the basis of scientific and sociological evidence, we can guess whether man requires religion in future for his evolution or not; because, the survival or annihilation of every thing is subject to its being able to fulfil human need. This principle has been stated by the Quran and is affirmed by science. The Quran says:

As for the scum, it vanishes as jetsam, and what profits men abides in the earth ... (13 :17)

There is a parable which I have repeatedly used in my lectures, and that is the parable of flood and the foam on water. It says that the foam disappears quickly and the water remains. Right and wrong are compared to water and foam, and what is beneficial remains, and what is useless disappears.

The question whether religion will survive in the future is related to its role in human evolution, that is, in the evolution of his essence, his spirituality and humanity and the evolution of good relation of man with himself and with other human beings-something which cannot be replaced by anything else, either now or in future.

The question, therefore, is that, either, in the future, human society will dissolve and mankind will be effaced from the face of earth as a result of collective suicide, or human society will attain its true destiny, which is an all-round evolution (evolution in his relation with nature, evolution in awareness, in power, in liberty, in emotions and sentiments and other kinds of human feelings). We believe that this evolution will be achieved-a belief which, in the first place, we have obtained under the inspiration of our religious teachings.

In a lecture entitled "The Significance of Occult Aids in Human Life" I have stated the point that this optimism concerning the future of humanity and human evolution and man's

deliverance from reaching a dead-end, cannot be provided by anything except religion. It is the role of religion in human life which alone guarantees the evolution in the human essence of man's being.

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History and Human Evolution

(Lecture II of II)

Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from Persian by Dr. 'Ali'uddin Pasargadi

Our former discussion was about the meaning of the historical or social evolution of man in the past. We-examined the question whether the processes which man and his society have undergone may be called evolution or at least progress, or whether there is a third alternative explanation that in some aspects of social life considerable progress has been made, while in other aspects there has been no progress or evolution. Or we may, at least, say that if there has been progress it has been very slow and out of harmony with the rate of progress in technical matters and evolution of social structure. The dimension in which man has not been able to make proportionate advance is the human dimension of social life. If we liken man's social life to an individual human being, technical progress and social development may be thought of as the body of society, while the human aspect of social life is the ethos of the individual. We may conclude, therefore, that humanity has physically overgrown, while its spirit and human ethos have made very little headway. The divergence between various views concerning the future is rooted in this matter.

Man's Future from Different Viewpoints

Some people are doubtful about the fact as to whether man has a future at all. They are uncertain because man is threatened with self-destruction. Such an uncertainty is evident among the enlightened and learned men of the West. Another group go a step further, and in addition to uncertainty, they are extremely pessimistic about humanity's future and openly cynical about human nature. They believe that man's nature consists of animality, lust, selfishness, egoism, deceit, cunning, falsehood, tyranny and such things, and since times immemorial when man began his life and social existence, this familiar scene of life has been always as full of evil and mischief, both in the days of barbarism and in the age of civilization. They believe that civilization and culture have not changed the nature of man, and nothing has been able to transform the wicked nature of this creature called man. The difference between the savage of primitive times and the civilized man of today is nothing with regard to goals and objectives. The only difference lies in the method of work, and

outward form and style. The primitive man, because of his primitiveness and lack of civilization and culture, committed his crimes more openly and unaffectedly, whereas the civilized man equipped with modern culture, commits the same crimes under the deceptive cover of high-sounding and stylish phrases and euphemisms. But both are essentially alike. What the wild man did, is not different in nature from what the civilized man does; the difference lies only in the outer form and appearance of their acts.

What is the conclusion? They say: pessimism and despair. What is the solution? They say: suicide, collective suicide. Fortunately, there are few among us who think in this fashion. If there had been no such ideas at all amongst us, I would not have mentioned it. But the thinking exists, and it may more or less exist mainly among students, and I mention it because I have noticed such thinking in some of the books which I have come across.

What is amazing in what they say is that man, after having reached cultural maturity, should commit suicide. Why? Because, they explain, when we find that human nature is beyond remedy, every person has the right to kill himself, and encourage others to commit suicide too. This is the logic of the type of writers such as Sadegh Hedayat. Such a kind of thinking is prevalent in various forms in Europe, and statistics show that in spite of all the welfare that exists in the civilized world, the number of suicides is increasing daily. By comparing the figures published in our newspapers we see this steady increase between the years 1955 and 1975. The Hippie movement was a social phenomenon, which was a reaction that took the form of dislike of civilization. It meant that civilization has failed to do anything for man, and that it has failed to change his nature. Do not compare this Western hippyism with our own hippyism, which is only a superficial imitation. But those who had originated this way of thinking in the West, had in fact a philosophy for it: the philosophy of disgust for civilization, and despair on account of its inability to do something to solve human problems. And this difficulty, too, is considered insoluble, a knot that by no means can be disentangled.

You may have read the reports coming from the UNESCO and elsewhere, as well as the articles written by our own experts, about the urge for taking refuge in narcotics. This trend in Western countries is the result of despair and cynicism about the future of mankind. When man reaches the stage where he finds no remedy, when he thinks that reform and revolution have, both, failed to change man, when regimes and systems of government and economic and non economic solutions have only changed their form without changing the content, then some people say: let us drop this matter once for all. And this is one type of view and theory.

The View of Scientism

Before this, there existed another view or theory which finds no support in the developed countries today, although there are still some who follow it in the developing countries. This view began with Bacon and those like him who said that the remedy for all human pains is science: when you build a school, you destroy a prison. By securing science and freedom, all

sufferings will come to an end. Why does man suffer? On account of ignorance, weakness and helplessness before nature, sickness, poverty, worry and anxiety, oppression of man by man, need and greed. They offered science as the remedy for all these pains

There may be some truth in this view. Science remedies ignorance, and weakness, helplessness and abjectness in front of nature, and the pain of poverty-in so far as it is related to nature. But not all human suffering comes within bounds of his relation with nature. What about the suffering produced by the relation of man with man, namely, greed, tyranny and oppression, which are derived from man's own nature, his feeling of loneliness, fear and anxiety? Science has not been able to remedy these. Therefore, this view that science can remedy all human pains has been abandoned in those countries. But in the countries which follow on the trails of the West, there are still individuals who think that science can really remedy all pains and sufferings.

Do not misunderstand me; my intention is not to negate science: for, as I said before, half of human pains find no remedy except through science. But man has other pains which constitute his 'human' suffering, the suffering which relates to his human dimension. Here science provides no help, and the scientists, when they reach this point, declare that science is neutral and indifferent; it is a means and it does not prescribe any goal for mankind. Science does not elevate human objectives, and does not provide a direction. Rather, it must be said that man uses science as an aid in the direction which he selects in life. Today we observe that most of the human suffering is caused by human beings, by those who are well-informed, and not by the ignorant. In the problem of colonialism in the world of today and since the last few centuries, were it the ignorant who exploited and plundered the resources of others, the ignorant and the learned alike? Or were it the learned and well-informed men who exploited both the ignorant and others?

Therefore, this supposition that science and education are the remedy for all pains and suffering of humanity is unacceptable. What I mean by 'science' or 'education' is that which makes man aware of the world; and awareness or understanding is something which is necessary, and nothing else can take its place. Again, do not misunderstand me: understanding is not enough to remedy all the pains of humanity.

The Viewpoint of Marxism

There is a third viewpoint here which says that the problem lies somewhere else, and that we should not be cynical of man's nature and despair on its account. The answer as to why the past has been disappointing, is that you have not been able to discover the roots of human suffering. These roots lie not only in ignorance, helplessness and such things, but in the type of ideology ruling over mankind. There is another problem for man which is independent of science, education and technology, and that is the problem of the ideology prevalent in society. To enable man, with all his human weaknesses, to start his struggle to change his

situation, his ideology must be changed.

According to this view, since man left behind his early communistic system and since the institution of private property came into existence, and since ideologies have been based on private property and class distinctions, and social systems have been based on class division, and the exploitation of human beings by other human beings has been given legality and legitimacy, all these defects and shortcomings, these bloodsheds, wars, conflicts, massacres and cruelties have occurred. But if the ideology ruling over man is changed, then all these defects will be removed; for then, mankind takes the form of a united entity, and all will be like brothers. There will remain no trace of tyranny, fear, worry and anxiety. Then human society will advance in its human dimensions on a par with the technical and material evolution; the spiritual development of society will then be parallel with its physical growth. This is the view of Marxism.

Marxism considers the root of all human suffering to lie in the ideology of class distinctions and private property; therefore, a society which has attained its ultimate form is a classless society, free of any contradictions.

There are many objections against this theory. One of them is: if an ideology is merely a system of thought or a philosophy, does it possess the power to change man's nature? Why, then, science couldn't change the nature of man? If all the elements of an ideology consist only of understanding without possessing the element of faith or belief, how can it influence human nature?

Is the ruling ideology derived from the nature of human beings in power? Or is it ideology that shapes the nature of the rulers? If you believe in the priority of objectivity over subjectivity, can you say that the dominant classes oppress others because they possess that ideology? Do they possess this tyrannical ideology because their nature is tyrannical? This means that their self-seeking nature requires it in so far as it is human nature to pursue selfish interests to the greatest extent possible. Then, according to this view, the quality of seeking profit has created this tyrannical ideology, and not that the ideology has produced that nature in man. Ideology is a tool in man's hand, and not vice versa. It is sheer idealism to say that man is a tool in the hands of his own thought and the ideology created by himself. If that is true, when the ideology is changed while human beings remain unchanged, has man then reached a dead end to the effect that the greatest exploitation of man by man and the extreme suppression of man by man should be perpetuated by those in the name of a classless ideology? The heart of the matter is that, no matter what form the social system may have taken in the past, man has remained unchanged and used that system as his own tool. How can we guarantee that it would not be repeated again? Do people have freedom in the countries where such an ideology is followed? There may be equality, but not in happiness; it is an equality in misfortune. There are classes there, but not economic classes. Out of a population of two hundred millions, ten millions control everything in the name of the communist party. Why do they not allow the other 190 millions to share the same privileges

provided by the communist ideology? Because, if they do so, then there would be an end to those privileges.

The severest repression and gravest misfortunes and miseries have been inflicted in the name of a classless ideology. A new class has emerged without bearing the name of a class. This is because when an idea or philosophy is related to the mind and based on an abstract understanding of mankind, such an understanding by itself cannot influence his nature. Understanding clarifies the way for man to distinguish his interests better and to be more farsighted. But it does not offer him any higher goals. If I lack a higher goal intrinsically, in my nature, how can I find it? Do the Marxists not say that thought does not have any fundamental reality for man? If thought has no fundamental reality, clearly it cannot control human behaviour.

The View of Existentialism

There is another philosophy called existentialism, whose outlook of the world and man is the same as the materialist world-view. The existentialists have a plan and a theory which tries to solve the deficiency of Marxism, namely, the question of human values. Since in Marxism the questions of humanity and human values and ideas such as peace and justice and ethical norms are considered worthless, idealistic chimeras, existentialists clung to the question of human values in order to provide man with a source of inclination, not just a source of thought but something which would be attractive enough to draw man towards itself, something which would provide exalted goals besides material ends. That is why they emphasize human values and what is called man's 'humanity'.

One may ask: you who say that the world is a mass of matter and physical action and reaction, and that totality of being is confined to matter, then what are these 'human values' in a universe of matter? Where do they come from?

Let us now talk of man. According to this view, man has no reality except his body. Matter constitutes his entire being. What may be related to this material composition is profit, which is something real. If I am totally a material entity, and nothing but matter exists in me, then in my relation with the external world, too, nothing but matter can interfere, and I must seek something which has material objectivity. For me, food, clothes, sexual relations and housing are objective matters. What, then, are the human values and the value of self-sacrifice which man senses within his being? They answer that they do not exist; however, man by his will can create values. Values do not have an objective existence; there is no such thing as 'value' in the external world that man can attain, they say.

Then, this question crops up: what is the destination of this mass of matter? It can only move from one point in space to another; reaching a destination which lacks a material or physical existence is meaningless. They say that values have no objective reality, but we give them

'value' by creating them.

This is one of the most comical and stupid remarks ever made. They should be asked: what do you mean by your claim that you 'create' values, and 'give' value to an act, to friendship, to generosity, to sacrifice, and to service (which according to you have no value in their own nature, since value has no meaning in the world of matter.)? Do you then mean that you can really give value to an objective existence? It is like saying to this steel microphone: "O microphone, I will give you the value of gold." Does it become gold with my saying so? Iron is iron. Or if I say: "O piece of wood, I grant you the quality of silver." If I keep on saying so to the end of time, it will not become silver. Wood is wood. Its reality cannot be changed, and man is unable to change it.

Therefore, granting value by creating it in the sense of giving objective reality has no meaning. What has meaning is giving an arbitrary, suppositional reality. What does this mean? It means, supposing something to be what it is not. Such arbitrary and conventional notions are useful only as means. FoE example, a non-Iranian visits our country, and we can grant him Iranian citizenship and an Iranian identity card, on the basis of which he becomes an Iranian national and can benefit from all the privileges and rights which an Iranian enjoys. The value of this conventional act is a means to something which may have an objective significance. This is like saying that a man or woman may want his or her spouse to be handsome. If the spouse happens to be ugly, and if the other says,"I grant you the hypothetical credit of being handsome," and then begins admiring the spouse for his or her hand someness, it is meaningless. This is the cult of idolatry, creating idols and then worshipping them. The Quran says: "O man, how can you make a goal out of something that you have yourself created, and make an idol of something that you have yourself hewed?"

The goal must possess a reality beyond imagination and assumption. One cannot assume something for himself as a goal, and then think it to be real. The value of an assumed thing is only within the limit of its being a means and a tool. Therefore, it is an illusion to say that man creates his own values. It is here that Islam asserts the existence of its absolutely coherent ideology.

The View of Islam

Islam to begin with, does not regard the past with total pessimism. Secondly, it is not so cynical of human nature. It says: This testimony that man of today gives against human nature, to the effect that it is based on wickedness and mischief, is similar to the ignorant verdict that the angels gave about man before he was created, and God rejected it.

See how the Quran relates the secret truths of events that preceded man's creation:

And when your Lord declared to the angels: 'I will make a deputy on the earth '... (2:30)

In these words God declared His decision to create a being upon the earth who would be God's deputy and viceroy on this planet. The angels, for some reason or another, seemed to be aware of only the animal side of man, and no more. So they said to God, as the man of the nineteenth or twentieth century would say: "Do You wish to make a being Your deputy whose very nature is mischief and bloodshed?

Create a being, who like us, shall be free of bestial desires, and one which is wholly spiritual."8 How did God answer them? He said to them:

Certainly, I know what you do not know. (2:30)

God says to the angels, "You paid attention only to one aspect of man: his natural and animal side, and are unaware of his spiritual and Divine aspect. I have placed something in his nature which makes him intrinsically free of any ideology. I have planted in him an inclination for exaltation. I have granted him an ideology, one of whose pillars is this natural and rational inclination. I have planted in his nature the seeds of love of truth, love of justice, and love of freedom. His essence is not totally selfishness, animality and class interests, or tyranny. He is a creature made of both light and darkness and this combination of qualities has lifted him above every other creature, above you who are angels and others besides you."

Can an ideology, which reduces all problem to that of classes and class interests, provide guidance for mankind? Can an ideology, which is totally rational or exclusively philosophical, heedless of any spiritual inclinations and unaware of the reality of man, serve as a guide for man? or teach and develop exalted values in mn? Or, can the other view which makes the absurd claim that man is essentially devoid of a nature, and is merely an earthly and material being, and that he 'creates' or hallucinates values for himself, help man to know himself?

O man, know yourself!

O man, teach yourself properly!

O man, train yourself!

O man, know your goal!

O man, recognize the path of your evolution!

It is an insult to the station of humanity to consider all man's efforts in the past to be motivated by the selfish interests of individuals, groups or nations. As man has two natures, an exalted one and a base one, within him, this internal conflict has raged within every individual human being. Those who have been able to subdue their lower urges to the higher powers, thus attaining a sublime balance, stand in the ranks of the supporters of truth and justice.

Those who have failed in this combat, have formed the group of means, bestial and degenerate beings. As the Quran says, the most magnificent struggle of man has been the combined between the supporters of Truth and the followers of falsehood. Who are these two groups? Supporters of Truth are those who have been liberated from the captivity of external nature and of other human beings and from the clutches of their own inner beast. They are those who have attained belief, faith and ideal, and rely on them. They are different from those human beings who seek material gains and are mean and corrupt.

The Quran speaks of the first clash and contradiction in the human world, which may either be interpreted historically or taken as an allegory:

And relate to them truly the story of the two sons of Adam [Abel and Cain]-when they offered an offering, and it was accepted of one of them, and not accepted of the other. 'I will surely slay thee, 'said one. 'God accepts only of the God-fearing,' said the other. 'Yet if thou stretches out thy hand against me, to slay me, I will not stretch out my hand against thee, to slay thee; I fear God, the Lord of all beings. I desire that thou shouldest be laden with my sin and thy sin, and so become an inhabitant of the Fire; that is the recompense of the evildoers.' Then his self prompted him to slay his brother, and he slew him, and became one of the losers. (5:27-30)

Islam takes the story of Abel and Cain to discuss the conflict between two human beings, one of whom has attained his ideal and belief and seeks truth and justice, and is free from materialistic inclinations; the other is a low animalistic being. The man with an ideal and Faith is one whose speech is Divine and chaste, and his deeds are wholly based on piety. He tells his corrupt brother: 'If you wish to kill me, I am not the one to kill.' Thus killing is not a part of his human nature, for, he fears the Creator. But the other is fettered by his own carnal desires.The story of Abel and Cain is one of the most magnificent stories in the Quran, which describes the Quranic view of a man who has attained belief and the ideal and is freed from the bondages of nature, society and self. How steadfast he is in the way of his faith! While the other is inclined towards something which is quite the opposite of it.

This story should not be mistaken for a parable of the class conflict, which is a Marxist idea.

While the Quran speaks of the oppressed on the one hand and oppressors on the other (mala' and mutrafun), it always tries to show that the progressive wars in history are those which are waged between men who have realized belief and faith and the profit seekers-a point which I have explained more fully in my book The Rise and Revolution of Mahdi (A).

As there are two opposing processes within man, in human society, too, there are two types of human beings: those who are exalted and progressive, and those who are base and bestial. Rumi, the poet, says:

The two streams of water, saltish and sweat,

Shall run through human nature until the doomsday.

In this school of thought, which believes in the love of truth and love of justice as ingrained in the human nature, in this school which trusts in man and in human values, and which unlike Marxism does not negate them or consider them mere idealisms, these things are regarded as an inherent inclination towards the existence of discoverable truths, and not something conventional or imaginary created by man himself.

The Quran says: O man, know yourself, and your own reality; these values exist within yourself as they exist in the great world, and you are a microcosmic model of the entire macrocosm: Mould yourselves in accordance with Divine norms.

These are Divine qualities, the reflection of which exists in the inner depths of his being, and he must discover it.

Accordingly, what is the future of man? Should we repeat the words of angels and say that man has a wicked nature, and wrap our hearts in despair for his future? Should we follow such suicidal ways as that of hippyism and take refuge in narcotics and such stuff? Or should we expect a miracle from an ideology, the only quality of which is belief in class divisions, and overlook thousands of its shortcomings? Shall we embrace a creed which says that motion is caused by contradictions, and without contradiction there is no motion, which means that when a society attains a stage in which there is no contradiction, it means a society without an ideal, without motion, a dead and stagnant society? Is the ultimate goal of man and his evolution to reach a position of standstill? Doesn't human evolution imply something far above the questions of contradiction and conflict?

Moreover, after man resolves those conflicts and contradictions and negates class controversies, he reaches a position when he must remove his own defects and this is only a beginning, the beginning of his vertical ascent which has no limit; for, in this system there is infinite room for ascension and edification even for the Prophet (S), though it is something that lies beyond our imagination, even though it is a reality for the Prophet (S). This is why

the ideal human society is in fact a society of men who have realized their ideal and attained faith and belief. It is the victory of effort, endeavour, piety and justice. Victory is one side of this coin of human existence, whose other side, as the Quran says, is the victory of God's Party over the party of Satan.

Man has been created to be an intelligent, aware, free and responsible being. From the first day that man has attained the station of humanity-regardless of whenever that might have occurred-he has been the deputy and vicegerent of God. There has been no time since the instant of creation of man when the earth was ever without the existence of a vicegerent, the hujjat (testimony) of Allah, that is, a being endowed with freedom and responsibility. As long as mankind as such a Creator who has decreed for it a goal and purpose-a purpose which implies his knowledge of himself and ultimate conquest of evil and mastery over his own mind-the battle between good and evil, and between truth and falsehood, will continue. It will continue to the point-as predicted by our great religious figures-when it will ultimately result in a universal government, which is also interpreted as the universal rule of Imam Mahdi (A)-may God expedite his appearence. On this basis, the evolution of man in his human dimensions has, by no means, reached a dead end from the point of view of Islamic Ideology. Islam, here, emerges as an ideology that relies on the spiritual aspect of human nature and which reclines heavily on recognition of this aspect of human nature. It stresses the need to make man aware of and to motivate him to develop and nourish this aspect of his being.

Islam seeks to achieve a balance between the two aspects: the higher and the lower, inherent in the human nature. The recommended acts of worship, rituals, the enjoined abstinence from sins, the forbidding from lies, treachery, slander and oppression, all and all, besides their social value, are basically designed for cultivation of the human aspect of man and revival of his humanity. Therefore, if we really desire to take a step the direction of this evolution, there is no alternative to rising above all the materialistic criteria and notions about human nature; that is, we must consider man as a being whose faith transcends the notions of class differences and classless society. Only then human struggle can acquire an essentially ideological character based on faith and belief.

But where is the beginning point of this struggle? The answer is: from inside oneself. This is what the Prophets have taught; and you will not find any example in other teachings which can equal in magnificence of meaning with what the Prophets of God have taught.

The Holy Prophet (S) sent an army to fight external enemies. The victorious warriors returned and the Prophet went forth to welcome them. Now look at the Prophet's sense of timing and occasion At a moment when he is expected to congratulate them and welcome them with a cry of 'Bravo!', the Prophet (S) instead says to them: "Praise on you who have taken part in the minor jihad, and who have yet to wage the major jihad ! Surprised, his Companions declare: "O Messenger of Allah, we don't have any battle ahead bigger than the one we have just been fighting?" The Prophet answers: the greater battle is the jihad against the self. This jihad is the struggle of becoming a human being. This is the viewpoint offered by Islam for

understanding of man and his struggle against his own carnal self.

The Quran says in this regard:

He who purifies the soul indeed attains deliverance, and one who corrupts it certainly fails. (91:9-10)

Issues such as these cannot be encompassed by other teachings which neither possess the requisite capacity to uphold them nor the room for such dicta and ideals.

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Al-'Imam al-Rida [a] and the Heir Apparency

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1. Goals and Methods:

After the martyrdom of al-'Imam al-Husayn (A) the objective of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), as we see it, was two-fold. Firstly, their goal was to protect Islam against corruption, forgery and mis-interpretation. This was done in several ways. The foremost of them was to establish the authentic Sunnah in the face of other claims which were influenced, to a lesser or greater degree, by the inclinations of existing regimes and the heresies (ahwa') of those in control of them during the Umayyad and the 'Abbasid eras.

Since the corruption (tahrif) on the Qur'anic text was out of question, the most dangerous phenomenon that confronted Islam from within was the narration of forged and corrupted traditions ascribed to the Prophet (S). The meanings of certain Qur'anic verses were distorted - particularly those concerning the most important political and social concepts - by the means of fabricated and corrupted hadith. Therefore, the Imams (A) did their best to spread the hadith among the people and employed all the means to extend the range of its circulation throughout the various regions.

Secondly, their objective was to protect the followers of the authentic Islamic path, and those who were close to it in various degrees, from ignorance, deviation and the danger of physical liquidation. Their protection from ignorance was secured by strong emphasis on the diffusion of Islamic teachings among them, through dispatching missionaries to them, founding centres of religious instruction in various regions, and establishing a rightly-guided authority for them, and these affiliated them to the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). This affiliation was a conscious one, based on knowledge (ma'rifah) and conviction, which guaranteed continuity and resistance in the face of trials and difficulties, not one based only on emotional

attachment or merely on taqlid, for that could not ensure the perpetuity and invincibility of a revolutionary political and ideological movement as sought by the Ahl al-Bayt (A).

They were protected from deviation (fitnah) by being persistently and repeatedly prohibited from being assimilated into the infrastructive of an oppressive and irreligious political authority, and by being enjoined to keep aloof from it without dissociating themselves from the rest of the Islamic community. They were instructed to keep close relations with all the Muslims, on the basis of coexistence with the authorities while abstaining from entering their organization or participating in its establishment so far as it did not harm the general order of the society or go against the basic vital interests of the community following the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). They were also protected from deviation by being constantly prohibited to take sides with this or that rival party from among the oppressors who struggled for power.

They, as individuals or groups, were protected from being persecuted in their districts or from being exiled or executed by the prescription of taqiyyah. We basically understand taqiyyah as being an ordinance aimed at the protection of the lives of individuals and their personal interests, so long as that does not violate the basic principles and political commitment to society. However, when taqiyyah leads to the abandonment of the principles or deviation from them in a political issue, or when it goes against political commitment to society, then it is not lawful, because it was introduced to protect the individuals upholding and defending the principles. Thus it should be noted that taqiyyah was prescribed to safeguard the principles and to insure their success in the future. It is not reasonable, therefore, that it should become a cause of the weakening or even the destruction of those very principles for the sake of protecting the interests of the individuals.

This objective manifested itself on the plane of practice and reality, after the martyrdom of al-Husayn (A), in the form of a balance between three elements: (1) taqiyyah on the individual level, (2) preservation of the general order of the Islamic society and the Muslim community in respect of administration and public services, (3) refusal to grant political legitimacy to the oppressive regime. The Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) dealt with the existing regimes within these limits. This balance resulted in the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) working with the existing system on an administrative level, in so far as that would preserve the general order of society and provide an atmosphere conducive to safety and freedom of movement for them and their followers. Thus the goal of safeguarding the ultimate prophecy from corruption would be achieved while preserving the political stand opposing the oppressive regimes, which characterized the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), in a live and active state.

A situation such as this has always been a painful one for those Islamic activists who, by virtue of their stand, have various responsibilities towards the society and yet work at a socio-political stage in history during which immediate and complete revolution is not possible. It was necessary for them to ensure, firstly, that political opposition does not damage the foundations of society and upset its general order.

On the other hand, it was necessary to exercise thorough vigilance at every stage so that the fulfilment of those requirements would not lead to the granting of political legitimacy to the oppressive or irreligious government. The guidance offered by the lives of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) in direction of political activism, either at the level of the Ummah or that of specific communities within it, will protect the activist from errors and confusion while considering the limits within which he must remain.

When we examine the nature of this goal, the characteristic of both aspects of which have been recorded and demonstrated in the lives of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), we find that, on the one hand, it has the fundamental characteristic of propagating the ultimate prophetic message and safeguarding Islam from distortion. On the other hand, we find that it has a defensive characteristic shown in the protection of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) from the afore-mentioned dangers.

The most profound significance of both the aspects of this goal lay in the preparation of the Ummah and the renewal of its foundations, after its relapse in the early period of Islam and the consequent deviation in political matters and issues pertaining to government, which in turn were followed by deviation on the legal front. This deviation was regarding the source and authority of the Sunnah, which is the second source of legislation in Islam after the Book of Allah, the Mighty and Sublime.

The object of this preparation was to safeguard the healthy nucleus constituted by the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and to enable it to expand by attracting a larger number of Muslims to its circle. This would facilitate the establishment of a state on the basis of Islam, following the creation of a wider Islamic base for it. This base would be committed to the idea of the Islamic state; it would promote it and serve as the point of departure towards it, until God, the Exalted, fulfils His ultimate promise through the appearance of the Mahdi (Baqiyyat Allah), may God's peace be upon him and may He hasten his appearance.

2. The Central Issue:

In order to understand this goal, one must study the social, political and legal aspects of the life of each of the Infallible Imams (A). Here we will study one aspect of the political life of al-'Imam 'Ali al Rida (A), his designation to the heir apparency of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun - which was perhaps the most significant phase in his political life - and the issues related to it.

We will see that al-'Imam al-Rida (A) played the role of an active leader in giving direction to the events even in his situation where he could only react, for his responses stemmed from a precise and universal plan that enabled him not only to counter the problem that he faced but also to carry out his duties of supreme leadership in the Ummah.

Here the discussion revolves around the question of succession, which was the central problem of the Islamic polity after the demise of the Prophet (S). This problem had grown steadily in significance until it reached a climax following the martyrdom of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A). It exploded with the revolution of al-Husayn (A) into a series of crises of political legitimacy throughout the era of the Imams (A) up to the occultation of the Awaited Imam (A). In the period of occultation it assumed other forms of expression.

In the Umayyad and 'Abbasid regimes - as well as other regimes contemporaneous with the 'Abbasids, such as the Umayyad regime in Andalusia, the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa - and other regimes that came after them in various parts of the Islamic world through the ages up to the time of the Ottoman caliphate and the Safavid sultanate - all the rulers identified their regimes, in character and origin, as being Islamic. They ruled in the name of Islam and governed over the people in matters of peace and war, the economy, politics, the judiciary, social organization and other matters of socio-political life on the basis of their governments being Islamic systems which implemented Islamic laws. The legitimacy of these governments was based on the claim of their being derived from Islam. But what was the source of the legitimacy of actual leadership?

On a theoretical and abstract level, the issue is dissolved, for all claim to be Islamic and apply Islam according to their own understanding of it, in different ways, without being faithful to the Qur'anic text and often disgracefully violating the spirit of the Qur'anic text.

However, on a practical level, there are two very different view-points about the source of the legitimacy of leadership: firstly, the view based on designation (nass); secondly, the view which disregards designation (nass) and is based on the principle of allegiance (bay'ah). The conflict between these two views dominated the Islamic Ummah after the demise of the Noble Messenger (S) up to the end of the Umayyad era, when the 'Abbasid missionary activity (da'wah) began.

The principle of designation (nass) had been firmly established in the minds of the Ummah as a result of the activities of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and their companions in educating them, firstly, about the issue of designation, secondly, about the cause of the perverseness of the Umayyad regime and its deviation from Islam on a theoretical and practical level, and thirdly, about the reason for the Umayyad rulers implementing the principle of designation (nass) in their own particular way. For example, Mu'awiyah implemented it by means of designating his heir apparent and seeking prior allegiance (bay'ah) for him. Due to all that, the principle of nass became the sole basis in the minds of a large section of Muslims, and came to be regarded as the most preferable choice among the rest as the source of the legitimacy of rule on the basis of actual and practical leadership. The principle of bay'ah became invalid as the only source of legitimate rule and was no longer anything but a complementary aspect of the principle of nass.

When 'Abbasid da'wah began, it confronted this reality in the political domain as well as in the mind of the Ummah. It also used all the suggestions and concepts of the past to allude to the principle of nass, without making an explicit commitment to it, for the fear that such a commitment would entail handing over power to the legitimate ruler.

Thus the 'Abbasid missionaries exploited the names of the 'Alids and the Ahl al-Bayt (A), and the term 'itrah (progeny). They constantly used an ambiguous expression which had been used earlier by certain people who had revolted against the Umayyads after the revolution of al-Husayn (A): the call to "al-rida min aal Muhammad".

This expression was a new endorsement of the position based on the principle of nass - and it was aimed to exploit all the political potential that this principle carried with the Ummah - without explicitly committing to it. This would enable them to make an about-face in a massive publicity operation aimed to misguide the Muslim public opinion. The 'Abbasid missionary activity advanced under this banner, and when it implemented its political plan to overthrow the Umayyad regime and establish the 'Abbasid state, it was based on the principle of nass.

From the very first speech of Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah, after he was acknowledged as the leader in Kufah, the 'Abbasids claimed that they had implemented the political plan of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), the family of 'Ali (A), the Banu Hashim and the descendants of the Prophet (S).

With the implementation of the 'Abbasid plan, three different ideas in the Islamic political thought were alternately used, in order to address the main question in the Islamic political problem during the era of the Infallible Imams (A). The question dealt with the source of the legitimacy of actual leadership after the expiry of all Islamic political entities which traced their origins to Islam and claimed to practise it.

1. The principle of nass. This was the principle of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) who devoted themselves to establish it firmly in the mind of the Ummah and to create an awareness in it through it, so that it became, as mentioned, generally acceptable to all the Muslims, whether as the sole formula for legitimacy of rule or as the most preferable one.

2. The principle of bay'ah. It completely ignored the principle of nass and did not acknowledge it, directly or indirectly.

3. The principle of "al-rida min aal Muhammad". It was the formula on which the 'Abbasid missionary activity was based and which was politically implemented. This principle, which in essence was the principle of bay'ah, was actually, as we have said, a distortion of the principle of nass aimed to exploit its political potential on one hand, and to escape from its political implications on the other. The political implication of the principle of nass is government by the Infallible Imam. This was what the 'Abbasids did their utmost to prevent.

However, for the success of their missionary activity, they urgently needed the political benefits of the principle of nass; hence the slogan of "al-rida min aal Muhammad".

Other expressions used by them were: "'Alids", "Hashimites", "Ahl al-Bayt," "the Offspring of the Prophet" (dhurriyyat al-Nabi)", and "the Progeny" ('itrah). These were the ideological and political tools they used to achieve their aim, and they accomplished it in the following way. In the mind of the Ummah the principle of nass was associated with the Ahl al-Bayt (A). Mentioning nass would make one immediately think of the pre-eminent right of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), and speaking of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) in a political context would call to mind the principle of nass.

The 'Abbasid missionary activity took advantage of this association and connection between nass and the Ahl al-Bayt (A), who were regarded as being the embodiment of the principle of nass in Islamic society. After their victory, the 'Abbasids developed the ideology that served as the basis of vindicating their rule in order to counter the difficulty created by the discovery of the truth by some of the senior leaders of the da'wah, who believed that they were active against the Umayyads on the basis of the principle of nass. The 'Abbasids had used the slogan 'revenge for the family of Muhammad (S)', as a justification for holding on to political power. They also used the terms 'right' (al-haqq) and 'inheritance' (irth) to vindicate their ideological stand. This was a political message understood by the people, and it suggested the principle of nass to certain groups of people who did not have strong links with the Ahl al-Bayt (A). The evil 'ulama' and venal thinkers were able, by intellectual and theological maneuvering, to misguide the people about the true meaning of the principle of nass.

3. New Distortions, and the Dilemma of the 'Abbasid Regime:

After the triumph of the 'Abbasids and the realization of their plan, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and their companions did not give up their political activity, based on the principle of nass, in the Ummah. Now, they did not only have to deal with the principle of the bay'ah. A new, political concept had entered the scene; it was the notion of 'al-rida min aal Muhammad (S)'. The legitimacy claimed by the 'Abbasids had been acquired on the basis of this formula on the instructions of Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah.

The Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and their followers faced these new conditions with vigour. A penetrating study of the texts concerning Imamate pertaining to the period following the establishment of the 'Abbasid state will reveal a development in the quantity of these texts, their intellectual and ideological content, and the increased emphasis on the central position of the Imamate in the belief of the Ummah.

The activity of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and their followers in educating and making the Ummah aware of the political question on the basis of nass, in revealing the fabrications of the 'Abbasid regime regarding the legitimacy of actual leadership, and disclosing the

ambiguity which was exploited in the slogan 'al-rida min aal Muhammad (S)' - all that re-awakened the consciousness of the Ummah with regard to the principle of nass and the conception of Imamate.

This education on the one hand, and the injustices committed by the 'Abbasid government on the other, served to nurture an atmosphere of revolution in the Ummah based on the principle of nass. This was often done with the slogan of 'al-rida min aal Muhammad (S)' - the same slogan on whose basis the 'Abbasid state had been established and by which it acquired its legitimacy. This means that the legitimacy of 'Abbasid rule had completely disappeared and the idea of a radical change, instead of one of mere reform, was put forward.

Thus it is evident that the problem which began to seriously trouble the 'Abbasid state regarding the basis of legitimacy of rule was a second political problem resulting from the political and military conflicts within the state between the major forces which formed the caliphal state, as well as the conflicts among the 'Abbasids themselves. From the reign of al-Mansur, in the early stages of their rule, the 'Abbasids had faced the problem of legitimacy with the policy of suppressing the 'Alids by measures unheard of in history. They also employed legal notions to bear upon the political question, such as: 'right' (haqq), 'inheritance' (irth), 'kinship' (qarabah), and priority of paternal cousins over daughter's sons.

Jurisprudence (fiqh), speculation, literature and theology were all used in this political battle, and some heretical theological sects emerged which put forward certain concepts and expressions that were employed in it. However, bitter experience had proved that these repressive measures not only failed, but further nourished the propagation and continuance of revolutionary trends which rejected the 'Abbasid regime.

Al-Ma'mun realized the futility of this method in facing the problem caused by the principle of nass. He realized that he could deal successfully with the problem arising from the struggle of factions among the 'Abbasids and the struggle of the major powers in the regime through political and military means. However, he could not deal with the first problem - that of the nass - with the same measures, since it was of a different nature and would not yield to such measures. Political measures would not be of any use, and military measures would only aggravate the problem.

The 'Abbasids were very aware of the ineffectiveness of political measures in this kind of predicament and of the counter-productive effects of military measures. It was enough to recall how the Umayyads dealt with the problem of Khurasan at the beginning of the 'Abbasid revolution, in order to learn a lesson from it.

Al-Ma'mun confronted both the problems together. He continued to deal with the second problem using the customary military and political methods, but he faced the first fundamental issue of legitimacy through an understanding of the nature and method of its

treatment. Al-Ma'mun realized that this problem had to be dealt with in a way that was in keeping with its nature. An ideological problem had political effects, so it was not reasonable to treat the effects without treating their cause. The appropriate method should also be ideological. Thus, he conceived the idea of an ideological solution for the ideological problem, and that was to make al-'Imam 'Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far (A), called al-Rida, the heir apparent.

The solution was brilliant, for it revived the 'Abbasid da'wah and restored effectiveness and credibility to the slogan "al-rida min aal Muhammad" by embodying it in the person who represented that slogan in the mind of the Ummah. Thus the slogan remained no longer vague or obscure; rather it was now portrayed in a particular person who represented the principle of nass in its complete purity. The brilliance of the idea was that it presented an exemplary solution to the problem, which realized the goal of al-Ma'mun's greatest desire.

On the one hand, it gave legitimacy to the leadership, thus putting an end to the political and ideological problem and legitimating all military and political confrontations with the revolutionary movement. On the other hand, it deferred returning the right (to the Imam of the Ahl al-Bayt [A]), for it was succession and not a transfer of power that was offered. It was doubtful that the heir apparency offered would result in sovereign rule, since al-'Imam al-Rida (A) was twenty-two years older than al-Ma'mun.

The idea was also brilliant since, apparently, it completely altered the balance in al-Ma'mun's favour, for the ideological problem which was earlier than the problem of al-Ma'mun and the 'Abbasid regime now became the problem of the followers of the principle of nass and the figure who was its embodiment: al-'Imam al-Rida (A).

4. The Problematical Aspect of Heir Apparency:

One aspect of this problem is that it is completely natural and understandable that a ruler who unlawfully holds power, as a result of which he is plagued by dangers and difficulties, should authorize the handing over of power after him to the rightful and lawful nominee who is twenty-two years older than him. This would be carried out in a carefully planned operation by the actual ruler who wished to overcome his difficulties in this way. The explanation of this aspect of the problem is simple after the circumstances, aims and precautions are clarified in light of our knowledge of the central issue in the Islamic political problem.

However, that which is difficult to understand is why the lawful, older nominee should accept this succession. Such an acceptance may imply an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the de facto ruler, helping to put an end to his difficulties, in exchange for the promise of handing over the government. Naturally, it was not possible to fulfil such a promise in view of the difference in the ages of the ruler and his heir apparent, in view of the constant possibility of assassination, and especially in view of what was indicated by al-'Imam al-Rida (A) when he

said: "It is a matter that will not be accomplished" and his awareness that al-Ma'mun's moves were not motivated by any conviction that the right to rule should be returned to those worthy of it, but only out of necessity. This is the problematic aspect of the issue.

To solve this problem, we must return to the fundamental aim of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) after the martyrdom of al-Husayn (A). In the light of that we will understand why al-'Imam al-Rida (A) first refused and then accepted the bay'ah of succession to al-Ma'mun.

As we said, this aim was twofold: firstly, to protect Islam from being distorted, falsified and misinterpreted; secondly, to protect the followers of the authentic Islamic path, the followers of the principle of nass and those Muslims close to it, from ignorance, deviation and liquidation. Al-'Imam al-Rida (A) in his refusal and acceptance, and in his term as the heir apparent, adopted a stand appropriate for this aim and took steps which led towards its fulfilment, in the midst of the varying reactions of amazement, resentment and expectation.

He was aware that the allegiance offered to him was the allegiance of death. He was aware of the difficulty of al-Ma'mun and the 'Abbasid caliphate, of the aims of al-Ma'mun in offering him the heir apparency, and of his own dilemma in this offer, which held the danger of acknowledging the legitimacy of al-Ma'mun's rule and thus acknowledging the legitimacy of the 'Abbasid caliphate. He was aware of the traps which would be set in his way, not the least dangerous of which would be the attempt to involve him in the apparatus of a government and an administration which he had not himself set up, and which were not in keeping with his views, his policies, and his character.

He was aware of all that. That is why his first stand towards the offer was to reject it. Al-Ma'mun and his party continued their efforts to persuade him, and he continued to refuse it until he faced veiled and open threats of death, whence he accepted the heir apparency, "tearfully and sorrowfully", according to many reports. This was how al-'Imam al-Rida (A) explained his acceptance at various times to some of his companions.

The refusal was understandable. It was in keeping with his general situation, since he was aware of al-Ma'mun's aims and of his own aims in his lifetime. However, the acceptance requires an explanation. The threat of death, inasmuch as it was a threat to a personal life, was not a sufficient reason, in our view, for the acceptance. The position of al-Rida (A) resembled in certain aspects the position of al-Husayn (A), in a form that was in conformity with al-Ma'mun's personality and era, and al-Husayn (A) had made the choice of martyrdom. We must discover the reason, deeper than that of preservation of personal life, which lay behind al-'Imam al-Rida's acceptance of the heir apparency and which was more fitted to his personality as an Infallible Imam and more in keeping with the firm aim of the Infallible Imams. In fact, we see that preserving personal life was not one of the real reasons for the acceptance, for al-Ma'mun's offer of heir apparency itself amounted to a sentence of death for al-'Imam al-Rida (A). We believe that the Imam was aware of it, and perhaps because of that,

he did not take any of his family to Marv, presuming that the same fate that was in store for him would befall them.

He was under a sentence of death if he did not accept, and he was under a sentence of death if he did. The difference between the two conditions was that either the sentence would be put into effect or postponed. We believe that his refusal was aimed to reveal further elements of al-Ma'mun's plans and intentions as well as the network of contacts which directed the operation of succession (wilayat al-'ahd). His rejection of the heir apparency was not merely a simple reaction.

We believe that al-'Imam al-Rida (A) in his stand - taking into account the difference in eras and the nature of the opposition -strongly resembled the stand of al-'Imam al-Hasan (A). The difference between the two was that al-Hasan (A) faced an immediate or deferred death sentence by witholding what was in his power to give. Al-Rida (A) faced immediate or deferred sentence, on the basis of the false offer that he would gain his usurped rights in the future. But in order to negate the legitimacy of this right, he chose deferment - like al-'Imam al-Hasan (A) - since it was more suited to the aim of the Imams (A). Al-'Imam al-Husayn (A) chose immediate death since it was more in keeping with his circumstances and the circumstances of the Ummah of his time, more closely connected to the firm aim of the Infallible Imams, and more destructive of his enemy, Yazid and the Umayyad regime.

5. The Causes:

In order to understand the underlying cause for al-'Imam al-Rida's (A) acceptance of the fatal allegiance, we must look for the answers on two levels. Firstly, what might have happened if he did not accept, and secondly, what was his aim when he did accept?

Firstly, what might have happened if al-'Imam al-Rida (A) did not accept the fatal allegiance? We believe that which might have happened is as follows:

a. Death. It was necessary for him to avoid being killed, not to preserve his own life, for the Imams did not value their own lives and consider them important except as a means of serving the Ummah. His death would open the door wide for tribulations for the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), who would then have no refuge or guide. We must link the avoidance of death with the essence of the issue of Imamate and its timing, when we note how young al-'Imam al-Jawad (A) was at the time the offer of heir apparency was made. His life was committed to achieving the aims and to avoiding the dangers.

He explained his acceptance to one of his companions who asked him about it, saying: "I chose acceptance over death." To another companion who asked him: "What made you become involved in the (matter of) heir apparency (wilayat al-'ahd)?" he answered: "That which made my grandfather (i.e. 'Ali [A]) to become involved in the council (shura)?"

We must note that he (A) was compelled to give this simple explanation, acceptable to the people, that he being on his guard against being killed, or the ambiguous explanation in which he made al-'Imam 'Ali (A) his precedent. We must also note that he gave explanations of saving himself from being killed in some of his other discussions. However, we must be aware that he was compelled to give this kind of explanation, for he was not in a position to speak openly about the reasons underlying his acceptance, in order not to disclose his plan, the reasons why it was necessary, and his actual objective.

He was under surveillance; his conversations and his letters were controlled. He lived in the same conditions as al-'Imam al-Hasan (A) and bore its agonies, as when he heard someone say to him: "Peace be on you, O humiliator of the believers", without being able to explain his ordeal to the people, not even to many of his confidants. He had to suffer martyrdom every day while he still lived, protecting those whom he loved and defended with his life, while they misunderstood and misinterpreted his actions!

This and other similar situations reveal to us how forlorn the responsibility of leadership was, isolated as he was even from the people closest to him, sad and distressed even in the radiant moments when difficult decisions were taken without being able to explain their reasons. How many agonies and pains did the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) suffer because of that, especially Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) who had the greatest share of this kind of suffering!

b. It was possible that he might not have been killed, but even then it was certain that there would be an increase in the repression, persecution and exile of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). In this way, al-Ma'mun would be able to put pressure on him and take his revenge.

c. It was possible that his rejection of the heir apparency might have led al-Ma'mun's enemies to exploit the situation, which would have added to the stormy revolutionary reactions on the Islamic scene at that time. Moreover, al-Ma'mun's overthrow was in the interests of the hard-line 'Abbasids, the party of al-'Amin, with their attitude to the 'Alids and their hatred of the Iranians; for the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) did not have the ability to take over the government and replace al-Ma'mun after his downfall.

d. It was possible that the refusal might have led to a wide-ranging propaganda against the Imam (A), to the effect that he had let a valuable opportunity pass by, and that in turn might have led to confusion and disarray among the people following the Ahl al-Bayt (A), who would have been subjected to persecution, exile, and intimidation. The inevitable question would have been raised in this dilemma: 'Why didn't he accept when the caliphate was offered to him?', instead of the question:

'Why did he accept?' We may recall circumstances similar to this in the issue of the arbitration

after Siffin and that which took place in regard to the issue of the truce (sulh) with al-'Imam al-Hasan (A).

e. Finally, we may ask: Had al-'Imam al-Rida (A) insisted on refusing the offer, wouldn't al-Ma'mun have been able to find an 'Alid substitute, an important member of society, whom he could appoint as successor? There were personalities among the Zaydis who were prepared for such an undertaking. There were also independent 'Alid personalities ready to accept this position. If this occurred, it was certain that the results would have been totally negative, and no new, positive achievements would have been realized by rejecting the offer. This is what such an occurrence could have led to, together with the disagreement that could arise among the followers of the principle of nass.

Secondly, what was his aim when he did accept?

a. It was to avoid all the negative results which would have ensued from his refusal. He had removed the sentence of death on himself, thus avoiding the occurrence of a change in the leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) during a critical period. He had also avoided a new wave of terror, exile and execution against the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), and prevented the hardline 'Abbasid faction from taking full control of the regime. In fact, he had created circumstances suitable for destroying this faction and had neutralized its capacity for political activity and its influence on the course of events.

He had prevented confusion and disorder among the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A).

Finally, he had prevented al-Ma'mun from substituting him with 'an 'Alid successor, through whom he could exercise a policy of repression against the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), using the principle of nass as an excuse.

b. By his acceptance, he was able to get in touch with people who would not have dared to communicate with him, had he not been the heir apparent. Thus, there gathered around him the Murji'ites, the Ahl al-Hadith, the Zaydis, the Ahl al-Sunnah and all the Shi'ite sects.

Through this contact, he was able to work with them on the basis of the principle of nass. Through it, he also enabled the traditionists and theologians on the path of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) to come into safe and free contact with these opposing sects, and put forward intellectual and political issues for calm, objective, and learned discussion. Al-'Imam al-Rida (A) himself practised this kind of wide-flinging intellectual activity. We should not underestimate the positive intellectual and political results which were achieved in the interest of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) from this contact and interaction.

c. He enabled the intellectual leadership on the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) to communicate and interact, freely and safely, with all classes of people, on the basis of the principle of nass.

Thus the principle of nass became more deeply rooted in the minds of the people and more effective in confronting the evil and misleading designs of the government and the corrupt religious scholars who aided it. It also gained greater acceptance among the upper classes. These positive and negative causes were not all defensive, but were a combination of defensive and offensive. Some of them were defensive and precautionary, while others were aggressive and penetrative.

Thus, after knowing the reasons for al-Ma'mun's offer, these are the possible causes for al-'Imam al-Rida's (A) acceptance of the offer of the heir apparency. What were the results, as far as achievement of the aims was concerned?

6. The Results:

Al-Ma'mun had achieved his immediate and urgent objectives but had failed to achieve his strategic objective. Al-Rida (A) had achieved his immediate and urgent objectives, and was successful in achieving his strategic objective as well.

1. Al-Ma'mun had achieved his aim of restraining revolutionary activities against the 'Abbasid regime, whether within groups following the principle of nass, or within the dissenting opposition who did not accept that principle. Providing the revolution with revolutionaries depended, in both the cases, on the hostile Muslim population. They saw in the acceptance of the heir apparency by al-'Imam al-Rida (A) a clear sign for the need to establish a truce between themselves and the regime, and so realized that armed revolutionary activity during that period was unreasonable. Perhaps some revolutionary leaders had also reconciled with that because they no longer had the means to arouse the people and to mobilize them for the revolution.

2. Al-Ma'mun had achieved his aim of creating a wider base for the political acknowledgement of his caliphate, since the allegiance to al-Rida (A) necessitated a renewal of allegiance to al-Ma'mun and an allegiance by many who had not previously acknowledged him. Thus, as a result of the allegiance to the successor, a united stand was taken by all during al-Ma'mun's rule. We may notice here what al-Ma'mun wrote in the document of heir apparency: "The family (Ahl al-Bayt) of the Amir al-Mu'minin (i.e. al-Ma'mun) paid allegiance to the Amir al-Mu'minin and to al-Rida (A) after him, as did the commanders and troops of the city, and all the Muslims."

He clearly asked for a renewal of allegiance to himself on this occasion, not only for allegiance to the heir apparent. However, he demanded sole obedience to himself from those who paid allegiance, as he stated in his document: "And hasten to obedience to Allah and obedience to the Amir al-Mu'minin". He did not include his successor in this statement and this reveals some of the hidden aspects in his plan.

3. He achieved his aim of creating great confusion among his enemies in the 'Abbasid household and their Arab supporters, who were partisans of al-'Amin. This made them too weak to resist him and struggle against his regime. They became fragmented, since the people moved away from them, and the popular base which no longer had an issue to fight over, broke up.

These were the urgent and immediate aims of al-Ma'mun on which the survival and stability of his rule depended. The continuance of revolutionary activities against him, the existence in many regions of the empire of many groups of Muslims who had not paid allegiance to him, and the conspiracies of the 'Abbasid household against him - these were factors which could have led to the downfall of his regime. Al-Ma'mun achieved these aims and ensured the stability and survival of his regime. Al-'Imam al-Rida (A) also achieved his urgent and immediate aims by accepting the heir apparency, the allegiance of death. His aims justified this, and all or most of them were realized.

On the strategic level, however, al-Ma'mun had failed while al-Rida (A) had been successful.

7. Success and Failure:

Al-Ma'mun's strategic aim had been to make his own caliphate, and the caliphate of the 'Abbasids in general, an expression of the principle of nass in the minds of the Muslims in general, and in the minds of the followers of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) in particular.

This was one of the oldest plans on which 'Abbasid missionary activity (da'wah) and thereafter the 'Abbasid state were based, for among the claims which were the basis of the da'wah and the state was the declaration about the wasiyyah from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, to Abu Hashim 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, to 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, to his son Muhammad ibn 'Ali, to Ibrahim, the Imam. Al-Saffah referred to this declaration in his first speech after allegiance was paid to him in Kufah. It was also quoted in Kufah, Madinah, and other places by Dawud ibn 'Ali and various other 'Abbasid leaders.

This was al-Ma'mun's strategic aim. When that was impossible for him to achieve, there was a substitute strategic aim, i.e., to remove the principle of nass as an ideological, doctrinal principle bound to the core of religious belief, and to turn it into a mere political formula devoid of any ideological or doctrinal content - a formula like that of other political and religious groups and parties fighting on the Islamic stage.

This aim of al-Ma'mun is evident in the many debates arranged by him between al-'Imam al-Rida (A) and the many groups of religious scholars, theologians, philosophers, and men of letters. He summarized it in a statement of his to al-'Imam al-Rida (A): "I consider the differences of our Shi'ah concerning that - the legitimacy of rule - to be a result of heresy

(hawa) and bigotry."

The first aspect of this aim made use of the unity of the Hashimite house with its 'Alid and 'Abbasid branches, and then its political unity, to make it, in its appearance and meaning, a firmly rooted reality in the mind of the Ummah. The second aspect of the aim tried to, show al-'Imam al-Rida (A) as a political, wordly, and maneuvering figure.

The achievement of this aim enabled political interaction with the principle of nass, and made it possible to make an alliance with it, enter into settlements with it, and to shape it like any other political formula. This was the strategic aim of al-Ma'mun, while the strategic aim of al-'Imam al-Rida (A) was to prevent al-Ma'mun from achieving his objective.

All al-Ma'mun's actions in the issue of succession were directed towards achieving this aim. The negative stand adopted by al-'Imam al-Rida (A) was to frustrate al-Ma'mun's conspiracy regarding the principle of nass while his positive stand was to firmly root the principle of nass in the mind of the Ummah, as it was closely linked to Islamic belief and was not merely a political formula.

We find in the life of al-'Imam al-Rida (A), before and after the fated allegiance, attitudes and statements which illustrate his plan of protecting himself from falling into the trap of al-Ma'mun's plan and which are the signs of confrontation in this silent battle about the strategic aim of each one of them. In what follows, we will present some of these signs. To form a complete or an approximate picture of the efforts of al-'Imam al-Rida (A) in this battle, we need to make a comprehensive examination of all his words and deeds in the legal field and in the field of intellectual guidance.

1. We come across following statements in history concerning al-Rida's continued rejection and then his acceptance of the heir apparency after al-Ma'mun and his aides began to make death threats: "He accepted the heir apparency, woefully and sorrowfully"; "He was in severe distress and under a great trial"; "He remained saddened and grieved until his death." "He would pray: 'O Allah, if my release (from suffering) lies in death, then hasten the hour for me.' ""He said to one who rejoiced at the ceremony of allegiance: 'Do not rejoice, for it is a matter which will not be accomplished.'"

This is the picture of the Imam's condition as seen by the traditionists and historians after his decision to accept, and these were some of his statements.

In this and similar ways, he expressed his dislike and distaste of this matter, and spread it among the people by speaking and writing of it to his confidants, so that everyone became aware of it. Historians and traditionists have reflected its wide knowledge among the people.

2. His stand in Neyshapur when he dictated the famous hadith to thousands of religious

scholars and traditionists, and to the rest of the people:

> "The declaration (kalimah), 'There is no god but Allah', is My stronghold; whoever enters My stronghold is secure from My punishment." Then he (al-'Imam al-Rida) said: "On its conditions (i.e. conditions of the 'kalimah'), and I am one of its conditions."

In this way he made a public announcement, while on his way to the heir apparency, of the principle of nass and his position on it. It is for us to estimate the profound and wide-spread reactions caused among the masses and the political and educated circles by such an announcement.

3. When he was paid allegiance to as the heir apparent, he stipulated its conditions to al-Ma'mun completely divesting the heir apparency of its power and political content, which al-Ma'mun had hoped al-Rida (A) would exercise so that he could achieve his strategic aim. He imposed the following conditions on al-Ma'mun: "That he would not appoint or dismiss anyone, or abolish a practice, or alter anything in existence, and that he would be an advisor on the matter from a distance."

After being appointed heir apparent, the Imam resisted all attempts of al-Ma'mun to force him into activities of power and draw him into the administrative affairs of the 'Abbasids. The climax of those attempts of al-Ma'mun was his offer to al-Rida (A) to go to Iraq, in order to manage the affairs of the caliphate from there. The conditions laid down by the Imam reflected a profound and comprehensive awareness of the nature of the situation from its objective, ideological and political aspects.

As regards the objective aspect, the 'Abbasid regime was made up of ruling and administrative organizations controlled and linked by a network of alliances which had become corrupt. These organizations and alliances guarded themselves against all intervention from the outside and either absorbed such intervention or destroyed it, or, if that were not possible, removed it. When they were unable to absorb the Imam, they tried to destroy him or remove him from their circle.

As regards the political and ideological aspects, the participation of the Imam would mean his receiving instructions and guidance from al-Ma'mun, and recognizing the latter as "Amir al-Mu'minin" and the legitimate ruler of the Islamic Urnmah. This is what al-Ma'mun wanted in order to achieve his aim of being included in the nass formula so as to apply and regulate it himself, with the Imam as a representative of the political formula with which the existing government would be allied.

The conditions laid down by al-Rida (A) had frustrated al-Ma'mun's plan. We believe that al-Ma'mun did not expect these conditions, for the success of his plan depended on the Imam

entering the network of the alliances of power and becoming entangled in its problems and hostilities. This would result in people making accusations against him and directing their anger towards him, thus tarnishing his pure and sacred image among them. In this way al-Ma'mun would achieve his aim of transforming the formula of nass, if he could not be included in it, into a mere political formula, and he would display the Imam as a worldly person and political maneuverer. Al-'Imam al-Rida (A) had avoided falling into this trap by setting these conditions, which transformed him from being a partner of al-Ma'mun - as the heir apparency made necessary - to being a witness against him and one of his victims.

4. In his speech made before al-Ma'mun and important state officials, influential people, notables from among the leaders of public opinion, and others after the Imam was paid allegiance to as heir apparent, the Imam (A) confined himself to saying:

> We have a right over you through the Messenger of Allah, and you have a right over us through him; so if you have fulfilled that (our right) towards us, we must (fulfil) the right towards you.

The substance of this statement was repeated in many of his replies and discussions, like his comparison of his own and al-Ma'mun's positions to those of the Prophet Joseph and the king of Egypt, and like his statement:

> Whosoever follows the Messenger of Allah is entitled to receive from him.

5. His many letters and discussions in which he constantly affirmed the formula of nass, of which is a letter about the articles of faith which he had written in answer to a request from al-Ma'mun:

> The Imam is the proof of Allah over His creation and the source of His knowledge, and obedience to him is incumbent.

These are some examples of his statements and actions with which he confronted al-Ma'mun's plan, and a researcher will certainly come across many others. In order to clarify this and other issues in the life of al-'Imam al-Rida (A), it would be very useful to examine, classify and analyze all the legislative and instructive texts which originated from him during the heir apparency, and to compare them with those which pertain to the period before it. That will reveal new aspects of this luminous and noble life.

The statements and actions with which the Imam (A) confronted al-Ma'mun's plan in order to achieve his strategic aim, together with the reasons for acceptance, led to the following results:

a. They firmly established the formula of nass in the mind of the Ummah.

b. They created an opposition within the regime on an ideological, political and popular level (we can regard the popular sentiments, expressed during the incident of the prayer of the festival ('Id) as an indication of this phenomenon).

c. They led al-Ma'mun to adopt a defensive attitude, for he felt that the principle of nass would have a popular reaction in society.

We will give an important example of the extent of actual influence that al-'Imam al-Rida (A) had on a public level. During the public outburst following the death of al-Fadl ibn Sahl and the attack of the commanders and troops on al-Ma'mun's residence, the latter took refuge from them and asked the Imam (A) to intervene and save him. The Imam came out to meet them and instructed them to disperse, which they did. A historical report describes this scene: "He approached the people and by Allah, they fell over each other, and he did not signal to anyone except that he ran and continued (running) and did not stop."

This incident shows the strong influence which the Imam had over the commanders and troops and those who were with them, despite the fact that in accordance with the conditions that he had laid down he did not intervene in any matter related to political authority so that he might be an object of hope or fear on that account. Thus, he was influential due to a cause which was not political or governmental but ideological, i.e., the belief in the nass and the obedience which that entailed.

Al-Ma'mun realized through his political experience that the appearance of these reactions demanded an end of this experiment, the experiment of heir apparency. He discovered that he had failed to realize his strategic aim as regards nass and that it was the Imam who had been victorious in this field. So he preferred to be content with the achievements of his immediate and urgent aims, before there was a reaction to the Imam's victory regarding nass. This would have created an irredeemable situation, in which the caliphate of al-Ma'mun and the 'Abbasids would have fallen into turmoil and swept away in a revolution which upheld the banner of nass in its purity.

Thus, he ended the allegiance of death by poisoning al-'Imam al-Rida (A).

In this way, al-'Imam al-Rida (A) became another one of those for whom Allah seeks retaliation (tha'r) in the battlefield between Islam and error. Tears were shed for him, hearts grieved for him, and he became an excellent model for those striving in the way of Allah and the oppressed.

When we see the similarity between al-'Imam al-Rida's acceptance of the heir apparency and al-'Imam al-Hasan's (A) acceptance of it, and then the similarity between al-'Imam al-Rida's acceptance of the allegiance of death and the decision to embrace martyrdom by al-'Imam al-

Husayn (A), we are in the final stage of the study. When estimating the effects on Islamic society during the era of al-'Imam al-Rida (A), of its immediate and urgent aims, and the greater goals of the Islamic movement in the history of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), we also see a resemblance between the acceptance of heir apparency by the Imam and the treaty of Hudaybiyyah. The Messenger of Allah (S) complied with the offer of the Quraysh - just as al-Rida (A) accepted al-Ma'mun's offer - which amazed many of his companions, angered others, and was accepted by those among them who possessed awareness. Some saw in the action of the Messenger of Allah (S) a granting of undeserved concessions to the Quraysh, but the outcome of the treaty of Hudaybiyyah was a victory, in the near future, of the strategic objectives of Islam. The acceptance of the heir apparency resulted in a victory, in the near future, of immediate and urgent aims, and of the strategic objective of al-'Imam al-Rida, in view of his being the guardian of Islam.

The former was one of the battles of Islam against disbelief (kufr) on the level of revelation (tanzil), and the latter was one of the battles of Islam against disbelief on the level of interpretation (ta'wil).

May Allah's blessing be on al-'Imam al-Rida (A) and his fathers and his descendants, the pure, among the former people and the latter. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

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An Introduction to Imamiyyah Scholars

Major Shi'i Thinkers of the Fifth/Eleventh Century

Wahid Akhtar

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Shaykh al-Ta'ifa al-Tusi's works in tafsir, hadith, kalam, and fiqh mark the culmination of many a generation's efforts in developing these sciences and their methodology. Besides al-Kulayni, al-Saduq, al-Mufid, al-Murtada and al-Radi, a host of scholars specializing in various branches of Islamic learning contributed to the flowering of intellectual activity in the Shi`i Islamic world, laying down the foundations of a school that could be distinguished from other schools of Muslim thought. The above-mentioned scholars developed Imamiyyah kalam, the Shi`i school of hadith, and a unique approach to the Qur'an and tafsir, mainly based upon the teachings of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet. In `ilm al-kalam the Imamiyya approach is basically rationalist but free from the extremist strains of the Mu`tazili emphasis on reason and the anti-rationalist reaction of the Ash`arites. In this field, the works of al-Mufid, al-Murtada and al-Tusi deserve special attention, which has not been paid to them either by Muslim or Western scholars in the context of the evolution of `ilm al-kalam.

In hadith, which was held to be the foremost and fundamental branch of Islamic learning, Shi`i Imamiyya compendiums were compiled with a more critical insight into the questions of authenticity. Shi`a muhaddithun employed meticulous methods to test and authenticate hadith literature. They evolved tools of analysis and laid down criteria to assess the veracity of ruwat and, as a consequence of this concern, `ilm al-rijal was developed. This science required the study of ansab (genealogy), biographies, and history, which produced among the Shi`a eminent historians, biographers, and genealogists.

Historiography was taken up by the Imamiyya scholars as a need of the time also, with a view to project the Shi`i interpretation of Islamic history for a better understanding of the tenets of the Imami faith. Without any doubt, most of the controversies and differences of faith which arose in the Muslim world, emerged because of divergent views of history. Apart from the first maqtal of Karbala' compiled by Abu Mikhnaf, Ibn al-Wadih al-Ya`qubi, Ibn Miskawayh and al-Mas`udi wrote the earliest histories of Islam. Works in this field also contributed to the development of a critical approach to understanding of theological and philosophical issues in a historical perspective.

The study of the Qur'an and its interpretation in the light of the teachings of the Imams of the Prophet's Family, found its full blossoming in al-Tibyan of al-Shaykh al-Tusi, who made use of various Islamic sciences and his expertise in Arabic language, literature, and grammar to write the first comprehensive Shi`i tafsir. This tradition was later extended to new horizons by Amin al-Din al-Tabarsi and Abu al-Futuh al-Razi.

We have not discussed pure philosophers, although it is generally acknowledged that most of the original philosophers in the Muslim world during the early phase of the development of Muslim thought were of Shi`i inclination, such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Miskawayh. In Sufism, also, we find names of eminent theoreticians like Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (al-Maqtul) and `Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani. All these thinkers were products of a particular Shi`i intellectual tradition. It is important to note that this intellectual climate was not brought into existence by a few eminent scholars alone. In the books of the Shi`i rijal and bibliographies (faharis), the names of thousands of ruwat of hadith, fuqaha', mutakallimun, mufassirun, and scholars of mathematics and natural sciences are recorded meticulously with dates and names.

The development of any school of jurisprudence depends on a particular set of principles of fiqh and a definite method of deducing subsidiary laws. Study of the Qur'an, tafsir, hadith, `ilm al-kalam and `ilm al-rijal provided tools to develop such principles and methods. This is the reason that early Imamiyya scholars devoted the best of their intellectual energies to evolve Imamiyya fiqh and usul al-fiqh. In these areas of study we find the most outstanding of the names of Imamiyya scholars. No picture of Imamiyya scholarship is complete without a general account of the developments in various fields of theology and philosophy. Apart from the detailed study of the works of leading scholars in different fields, it is essential to have a comprehensive picture of the intellectual activity in the framework of the Imamiyya faith, and such a general picture needs to take into account even the contributions of, comparatively, not-very-original thinkers and scholars. This part of the present series of articles is aimed at giving an account of the Imamiyya scholars' works in the fifth/eleventh century. Some of the scholars discussed in this article are outstanding in their specialized areas of study, such as Abu al-`Abbas al-Najashi, whose work on the rijal of the Shi`a still remains the most authentic work in the field.

The fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries are considered to form the golden age of Muslim intellectual and cultural developments. In Imamiyya thought, these two centuries, together with the sixth/twelfth century, constitute the era of the flowering of the Shi`i mind. We have selected only a few scholars as representatives of the general scholarly tradition among the Imamiyya, but many of those who are lefi also deserve the historian's attention. Paucity of literature about Imamiyya scholars is the main obstacle in the way of a comprehensive study of many a scholar. Almost all early works on the rijal of the Shi`a remain in Arabic and even the most important of them have not yet been translated into any other language. Despite their authenticity, these books, for instance al-Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim

and al-Tusi and the Rijal of al-Najashi, give only very brief accounts of the scholars. If one wishes to form a comprehensive picture of various scholars' works in different fields, one has to refer to a large number of books in Arabic and Persian. Most of the works of the Imamiyya scholars, like those of other Muslim schools, were written in Arabic and were destroyed in the course of wars, invasions of the Muslim world, and intersectarian riots. The Imamiyya scholars were more unfortunate than others in this respect. Approximately ninety per cent of the works listed in early biographies have totally disappeared, and those that are extant are scattered all over the Muslim world in obscure libraries and corners. This is a factor that had been responsible for the paucity of material on Imamiyya scholarship.

For political reasons and extra-academic motives, orientalists have been mainly interested in the study of the majority sect of the Muslims. The Shi`i school has been systematically neglected and, at the same time, maligned by non-Shi`i scholars and the orientalists. It is still the main target of the hostile Wahhabi petro-Dollar propaganda machinery. In an unbiased and objective view of the issue of Islam, the differences between the Sunnis and the Shi`a, apart from the issue of the Imamate, concern subsidiary and secondary issues, mostly of historical and political nature. The points of difference between the two in matters of fiqh are no more pronounced than those among the officially accepted four schools of Sunni fiqh. A comparative study of the five schools of fiqh (the four Sunni and the Ja`fari) is essential for a better understanding of Islam. This study requires as a prerequisite a general survey of the work done by Imamiyya scholars in different areas of Islamic learning. The present study is a beginning in this direction - an attempt to fill up some obvious gaps. If one ignores polemical writings on controversial issues, one would find a spirit of co-operation and mutual appreciation among Sunni and Shi`i scholars of the early centuries in developing various Islamic sciences. Imamiyya thought is a part of general Islamic thought and needs to be studied in this perspective.

With this introduction I present brief accounts of a few selected Imamiyya scholars of the fifth/eleventh century. A similar survey of the scholars of the earlier centuries is also essential for a better and more comprehensive understanding of Islam.

1. The al-Ghada'iris

Two of the earliest scholars of the fifth/eleventh century are the al-Ghada'iris, father and son, Husayn b. `Ubayd Allah al-Ghada'iri (d. 411/1020) and Ahmad b. al-Husayn. The former was a contemporary of al-Shaykh al-Mufid and a teacher of al-Shaykh al-Tusi and al-Najashi, while the latter was a class-fellow and intimate friend of al-Tusi and al-Najashi).

Shaykh al-Ta'ifa, in al-Rijal, mentions his name in the chapter dealing with those that did not directly narrate traditions from the Imams. He writes:

> Husayn b. `Ubayd Allah al-Ghada'iri, known as Abu `Abd Allah, has narrated a

> number of ahadith and was an expert of `ilm al-rijal. He has many works to his credit, which have been mentioned in al-Fihrist. [1]

But al-Tusi did not give any list of Abu `Abd Allah's works in his al-Fihrist. This omission on his part may be explained as a matter of forgetfulness only. [2]

Al-Najashi, in his work on rijal, writes:

> Husayn b. `Ubayd Allah b. Ibrahim al-Ghada'iri Abu `Abd Allah is my teacher. May Allah bless his soul. Among his books are:

- Kitab kashf al-tamwih wa-l-ghumma,
- Kitab al-taslim `ala Amir al-Mu'minin bi imrat al-mu'minin,
- Kitab tadhkir al-`aqil wa tanbih al-ghafil fi fadl al-`ilm,
- Kitab `adad al-A'imma wa-ma shadhdha `ala al-musannifin min dhalik,
- Kitab al-bayan `an habwat al-Rahman,
- Kitab al-nawadir fi l-fiqh,
- Kitab manasik al-hajj,
- Kitab mukhtasar manasik al-hajj,
- Kitab yawm al-Ghadir,
- Kitab al-radd `ala al-Ghulat wa-l-Mufawwida,
- Kitab sajdat al-shukr,
- Kitab mawatin Amir al-Mu'minin,
- Kitab fi fadl Baghdad, and
- Kitab fi qawl Amir al-Mu'minin: `Ala ukhbirukum bi khayr hadhihi al-umma.

> He permitted us to narrate these books and all his traditions. He died, may Allah bless his soul, in the middle of Safar 411/1020. [3]

Al-`Allama al-Hilli in al-Rijal, al-Tafrashi in Naqd al-Rijal, Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi in Hadiyyat al-ahbab and al-Fawa'id al-Ridawiyya, have added nothing to the accounts given by al-Tusi and al-Najashi. [4] Al-Dhahabi, in Mizan al-I`tidal, and Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani, in Lisan al-Mizan, both make mention of him. Al-Dhahabi makes special mention of his 'lack of insight', by which he actually means to refer to his Shi`i faith.[5] Ibn Hajar also referred to him as a leader of Shi`i `ulama' but without any derogatory remark, and adds that his decrees are more respected and are obeyed more faithfully than those of kings.[6]

Ayatullah al-Khu'i is of the view that it is impossible for a scholar of the stature of al-Tusi that he should refer to something in one of his works regarding his other work in which he actually did not make mention of the subject referred to. Therefore, he argues that most probably in al-Fihrist of al-Shaykh al-Tusi a list of the works of al-Ghada'iri was given but was omitted in its copies that are extant today.[7]

Abu `Abd Allah received instruction under the greatest of `ulama' of his time, a list of whom is given in Qamus al-Rijal. The most eminent among them were Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. al-Walid al-Qummi, Abu al-Qasim Ja`far b. Muhammad Qulawayh, Harun b. Musa al-Tall`ukbari, al-Shaykh al-Saduq Ibn Babawayh, Abu `Abd Allah Ahmad al-Saymari, and Muhammad b. `Ali al-Ash`ari al-Qummi.[8] Among his pupils we have already mentioned the names of al-Najashi and al-Tusu. Besides them, we may add the name of his celebrated son Ahmad b. al-Husayn al-Ghada'iri.

Al-Ghada'iri the junior, Ahmad, attended the classes of his father with al-Najashi and al-Shaykh Tusi. `Inayat Allah Quhpa'i, in Majma` al-Rijal, mentions him as a teacher of al-Najashi and al-Tusi.[9] But he seems to have confused the father with the son. Similarly, many an author of books on Rijal have mistakenly attributed Ahmad b. al-Husayn's work on Rijal to his father. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, in al-Fihrist, refers to two books of Ahmad b. al-Husayn, saying one is on usul and the other is on Rijal.[10] Al-`Allama Shaykh Aqa Buzurg al-Tihrani, in Musaffa al-maqal fi musannifi al-rijal, is of the view that these two books might have been in addition to two of his known works on rijal, of which one is about authentic `ulama' and the other is about inauthentic or weak narrators of hadith.[11] Sayyid Ahmad b. Tawus (d. 673/1273) has reproduced an entire book of al-Ghada'ri, that is his book al-Du`afa', in his own work, Hall al-ishkal. This copy of the book reached Mulla `Abd Allah al-Shushtari (d. 1021/1612), who in his turn reproduced the book in his work on rijal, and this was the version of al-Ghada'iri's Rijal that is available to us today.[12] It seems strange that these two books were not mentioned by al-Tusi, but were available to Ibn Tawus, and that two of his pupils, al-`Allama al-Hilli and Ibn Dawud also quoted from it. Aqa Buzurg al-Tihrani, in Musaffa al-maqal fi musannifi al-rijal, says that Ibn Tawus himself had not established its authenticity, but he merely described it as one attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri, and his pupils accepted it on his authority. Al-`Allama al-Hilli and Ibn Dawud could also discover Ibn al-Ghada'iri's book on mamduhun.[13] There is no evidence that al-Najashi had these books, but

he referred to another work of Ibn al-Ghada'iri, al-Ta'rikh, in his account of Ahmad b. Abi `Abd Allah al-Barqi.[14] It is just possible that by al-Ta'rikh he meant the same two books. In al-Dhari`a, also, Aqa Buzurg has discussed the authenticity of Kitab al-Du`afa; and concluded that most probably this work was compiled by an anti-Shi`a author in order to malign rijal of the Imamiyya, and it was wrongly attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri.[15] However, two points are clear: the son al-Ghada'iri is the author of the often quoted book on rijal, and secondly that the book about inauthentic Shi`i rijal is a spurious one, wrongly attributed to him.

2. Abu al-Hasan al-`Umari

Abu al-Hasan al-`Umari was a descendant of `Umar b. `Ali b. Abi Talib. `Umar was the progeny of the marriage of Amir al-Mu'minin with Umm Habib bint Rabi`a.[16] Al-`Umari is reported to have lived until 443/1051,[17] and is acknowledged as an authority on genealogies of Arab tribes in general and the descendants of the Prophet and Abu Talib in particular. His forefathers were among Shi`i scholars of eminence. He was a contemporary of al-Sharif al-Murtada and al-Sharif al-Radi, whom he knew very well. His father Abu al-Ghana'im was also an expert in the genealogy of the Arabs. Abu al-Hasan al-`Umari's teacher, besides his father, was Abu al-Hasan Muhammad b. Abi Ja`far, known as al-Shaykh al-Sharaf (d. 435/1042), a descendant of Husayn al-Asghar, son of al-Imam Zayn al-`Abidin `Ali b. al-Husayn, who was also a teacher of al-Murtada and al-Radi.[18]

Ahmad b. `Ali Dawudi al-Hasani, known as Ibn `Anbah, (d. 828/1424), author of `Umdat al-talib fi ansab Al Abi Talib, which is considered to be the most authentic book on the genealogical tree of the descendants of the Prophet and Abu Talib, has liberally borrowed material from al-`Umari's works in the field. He acknowledges:

> Abu al-Hasan `Ali b. Abi al-Ghana'im Muhammad b. `Ali b. Muhammad represents the culmination of the science of genealogy. His views are accepted as the last word in this field by later scholars. He met all the great experts of this science and compiled in this field al-Mabsut, al-Shafi, al-Mujdi and al-Mushajjar. Abu al-Hasan al-`Umari lived in Basra but shifted to Mosul after 423/1032, where he married and had children. . . . We narrate the works of Abu al-Hasan al-`Umari on the authority of the Naqib Taj al-Din Muhammad b. Mu`ayya al-Hasani, who narrated them from his teacher, Sayyid `Alam al-Din Murtada b. Sayyid Jalal al-Din `Abd al-Hamid b. al-Sayyid Shams al-Din Fikhar b. Ma`bad al-Musawi, who narrated from his father, Sayyid Jalal al-Din `Abd al-Hamid b. Taqi al-Husayni, who narrated from Ibn Kulthum al-`Abbasi, the genealogist, who quoted from Ja`far b. Hashim b. Abi al-Hasan al-`Umari, who narrated from his grandfather, Abu al-Hasan `Ali b. Muhammad al-`Umari.[19]

The author of `Umdat al-talib was a pupil and son-in-law of Taj al-Din b. Mu`ayya.

Sayyid `Ali Khan al- Shirazi (d. 1120/1708), in al-Darajat al-rafi`a fi tabaqat al-Shi`a, acknowledges the greatness of al-`Umari in the field of genealogy, and says that all later scholars and researchers in this field are indebted to him.[20]

In Ma`alim al-`ulama' and al-Fawa'id al-Ridawiyya, al-`Umari is said to have been known by the nickname 'Ibn al-Sufi'.[25]

3. Salar b. `Abd al-`Aziz

One of the most eminent scholars of the fifth/eleventh century is Abu Ya`la Hamza b. `Abd al-`Aziz al-Daylami (d. 448/1056), known as Salar, or Sallar, an eminent pupil of al-Shaykh al-Mufid and al-Sayyid al-Murtada, who himself educated and trained a number of great Shi`i scholars. He is sometimes confused with Abu Ya`la al-Ja`fari, son-in-law of al-Shaykh al-Mufid. Abu Ya`la is a common kunya (patronymic) of all those persons whose name is Hamza, such as Hamza b. al-Qasim (grandson of `Abbas b. `Ali b. Abi Talib), Hamza b. Ya`la al-Ash`ari al-Qummi (a companion of the eighth Imam of the Prophet's Family, al-Imam al-Rida), for Hamza b. `Abd al-Muttalib, an uncle of the Prophet, was called by this kunya.[22]

Shaykh Muntajab al-Din al-Razi (d. 600/1203), in his al-Fihrist, mentions one of his works, al-Marasim al-`Alawiyya fi l-ahkam al-Nabawiyya.[23] Ibn Shahr Ashub (d. 588/1192) refers to his other works, viz. al-Muqni` fi l-madhhab, al-Taqrib fi usul al-fiqh, al-Radd `ala Abi al-Husayn al-Basri's al-Shafi, and Kitab al-tadhkira fi haqiqat al-jawhar wa al-`arad.[24] Mir Mustafa al-Tafrashi (d. 1021/1612), regarding the book in refutation of Abu al-Husayn al-Basri's al-Shafi, writes in the footnotes of Naqd al-Rijal:

> Kitab al-radd is written in refutation of Abu al-Husayn al-Basri's al-Shafi, a famous book. The reason for writing this book was that al-Qadi `Abd al-Jabbar al-Mu`tazili al-Hamadani wrote a book in refutation of the Shi`a faith and named it al-Kafi. Afterward al-Sayyid al-Murtada compiled a book, entitled al-Shafi, a refutation of which was written by Abu al-Husayn al-Basri, which found its rejoinder in Salar's book.[25]

Al-`Allama al-Hilli (d. 726/1326) mentions Salar as an intellectual leader of the Shi`a in the fields of fiqh and literature.[26] Hasan b. Dawud, a contemporary of al-`Allama al-Hilli, besides al-Marasim, mentions another of Salar's works, al-Abwab wa l-fusul in fiqh.

Shaykh Fakhr al-Din al-Turayhi (d. 1058/1648), in his famous dictionary Majma` al-bahrayn, writes that Salar was from Mazandaran and attended lectures of al-Murtada. He quotes Ibn al-Jinni saying that he met Salar and learned some lessons from him.[27] `Ali Dawani refutes both these assertions, saying that Daylam was situated near the present Qazwin and Gilan, and has no relation with Mazandaran. He argues that al-Turayhi, being an Arab, was not

familiar with the geographical position of Daylam. Al-Turayhi changed the places of Abu al-Fath `Uthman b. al-Jinni and Salar, describing the former as pupil and the latter as teacher, while Salar was a pupil of Ibn al-Jinni (d. 392/1002). Ibn al-Jinni was also a teacher of al-Sayyid al-Murtada and al-Radi, and he died 56 years before the death of Salar.[28]

Al-`Allama Bahr al-`Ulum, in al-Rijal, quotes `Izz al-Din Hasan b. Abi Talib b. Rabib al-Din Abu Muhammad al-Yusufi writing in Kashf al-rumuz, that Salar was a leader of the Shi`a, and mentions that Hasan b. Husayn b. Babawayh, Mufid al-Nishaburi al-Razi, and Shaykh `Abd al-Jabbar al-Muqri al-Razi, all of whom were eminent Imamiyya scholars, were among Salar's well-known pupils.[29] `Allama Bahr al-`Ulum adds that al-Sayyid al-Murtada, in the beginning of Ajwibat al-masa'il al-Sallariyya, writes that very critical questions, which reveal Salar's insight and expertise in fiqh, were answered by him at the instance of his teacher, al-Shaykh al-Mufid. This compliment paid by al-Murtada to Salar serves as a testimonial of his scholarship.[30]

Salar, a contemporary of al-Tusi and a pupil of al-Mufid and al-Murtada, lefi behind him scores of pupils that were eminent scholars of their times and included both Shi`i and Sunni experts in fiqh, kalam, hadith, nahw (Arabic grammar), and literature. Outstanding among them are: Abu al-Salah al-Halabi, Abu Fath al-Karajiki, Shams al-Islam Hasaka and his son `Ubayd Allah b. al-Hasan (father and grandfather of Shaykh Muntajab al-Din), Mufid al-Nishaburi, Mufid al-Razi, and Abu al-Makarim Fakhir al-Nahwi.[31]

Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, with reference to Rawdat, writes that Salar was the first faqih to issue a decree that congregation prayer on Friday was prohibited due to the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam.[32] He also writes on the authority of the same book that Salar died in 448/1056 or 463/1070, and was laid to rest in Khusrow Shah, one of the villages in the province of Tabriz.[33] `Ali Dawani is hesitant to accept the place of Salar's burial in Khusrow Shah, for this report is based on Tadhkirat al-`ulama' by Mulla Hashri. He argues that the same author claims that the grave of Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi is at Khusrow Shah, while it is situated in the courtyard of the shrine of the Ma`suma of Qum.[34] `Ali Dawani accepts the date of his death as given by al-Safadi, that is 448/1056.[35] He further says that Salar lived till his end at Baghdad, and, therefore, there was no reason to bury him in the suburbs of Tabriz.[36]

4. Abu al-Salah Al-Halabi

Halab has been a centre of Shi`a learning and activities since the early days of Islam. It is said that one of the wives of al-Imam al-Husayn, while being taken to Dimashq along with other prisoners of Ahl al-Bayt after the tragedy of Karbala', miscarried a child, Mahassan b. al-Husayn, at this place, who was buried there. Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 626/1229), in Mu`jam al-buldan, wrote that Qal`a-ye Halab was the Palace of Ibrahim (Maqam Ibrahim), where the

severed head of Yahya b. Zakariyya was put in a trunk. He also says that according to a tradition someone saw in a dream that the grave of Imam `Ali was also beside Bab al-Jinan. He says further that inside Bab al-`Iraq is situated the Mosque of Ghawth (Masjid Ghawth), and there on a stone is an inscription attributed to Amir al-Mu'minin `Ali. Yaqut also refers to the grave of Mahassan b. al-Husayn at Kuh-e Jawshan in the eastern part of the town. He adds that the fuqaha' of Halab issue fatawa according to Shi`i fiqh.[37]

Jalal al-Din al-Balkhi al-Rumi (d. 672/1273), in his Mathnawi, ironically refers to the mourning ceremonies at Halab commemorating the martyrdom of al-Imam al-Husayn, which is indicative of the devotion of the residents of Halab for AhI al-Bayt.[38] Sayf al-Dawla al-Hamdani and the rulers of his family, who professed Shi`i faith, chose Halab as their capital and later the Fatimids ruled the city and its adjoining areas. All these factors contributed to the development of Halab as a centre of Shi`i scholarship. Halab came into prominence in the world of Shi`i learning because of the family of Abu al-Makarim b. Zuhra, but the first Shi`i scholar of Halab to win fame in the Muslim world was Abu al-Salah Taqi al-Din b. Najm al-Din al-Halabi.[39]

Taqi al-Din b. Najm al-Din al-Halabi (d. 449/1057) was among the most prominent pupils of al-Sayyid al-Murtada and al-Shaykh al-Tusi, and was deputed at Halab as representative of his teacher. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, in his al-Rijal, in the chapter dealing the 'ulama' that did not narrate directly from the Imams, mentions Abu al-Salah's name, saying that he is a reliable scholar and has to his credit many books. Al-Tusi also certified that he had been a pupil of both himself and al-Sayyid al-Murtada.[40] This testimony by a teacher of the repute of al-Tusi for one of his pupils is a rare thing, for al-Tusi never mentioned any of his pupils among the eminent `ulama' of the post-Occultation period. This honour, if not unprecedented, is rarely won by a scholar in the annals of Shi`i scholarship.

Ibn Shahr Ashub, in Ma`alim al-`ulama', mentions the following works of Abu al-Salah: Kitab al-bidaya in fiqh, and a commentary on al-Dhakhira by al-Sayyid al-Murtada.[41] Al-`Allama al-HilIi (in Khulasat al-aqwal ), Ibn Dawud, and al-Shaykh al-Hurr al-`Amili (in Amal al-`amil) paid tribute to his scholarship.[42] The latter mentions his name as Taqi al-Din, which seems to be his full name, and probably al-Tusi, naming him Taqi, used only the first part of his full name. Al-Shaykh al-Hurr al-`Amili refers to another work of Abu al-Salah, Taqrib al-ma`arif.

It is worth mentioning that though many scholars of Halab are known as al-Halabi, whenever al-Halabi alone as a title is referred to in the terminology of fuqaha' it is meant to refer to Abu al-Salah only; and whenever al-Halabiyyan is used, it refers to Abu al-Salah and Sayyid Abu al-Makarim b. Zuhra. The Shafi`i scholar, Nur al-Din al-Halabi (d. 1044/1634), the author of Insan al-`uyun fi sirat al-Amin wa-l-Ma'mun, popularly known as al-Sira al-Halabiyya, is also remembered as al-Halabi.[43] However, the first person who won universal acclaim as al-Halabi and who placed Halab on the map of Islamic learning was Abu al-Salah.

5. Abu al-Fath al-Karajiki

Another pupil of al-Sayyid al-Murtada and al-Shaykh al-Tusi, who also received instruction under al-Shaykh al-Mufid was Abu al-Fath Muhammad b. `Ali b. `Uthman al-Karajiki (d. 449/1057). Ibn Shahr Ashub, in Ma`alim al-`ulama' gives a list of fourteen books written by him, and al-Shaykh al-Hurr al-`Amili mentions eight of his works. Al-Karajiki is distinguished as a faqih, muhaddith, and mutakallim. `Allama Nuri in Mustadrak, gave a detailed account of his works. A selected list of his works is given below:

- Kitab al-salat (in three parts),
- al-Risala al-Nasiriyya,
- Kitab al-talqin,
- Kitab al-minhaj (on manasik al-hajj),
- Kitab al-mawarith,
- Kitab al-muqni` wa-l-lajjaj,
- al-Mansak (on hajj for women),
- Nahj al-bayan (for ladies),
- Kitab al-istitraf (fi l-fiqh wa-l-insaf),
- al-Ikhtiyar min al-akhbar (summary of Da`a'im al-Islam),
- Kitab al-radd (refutation of Abu al-Mahasin al-Ma`arri's criticism of al-Sayyid al-Murtada),
- al-Bustan (in fiqh),
- Naqd Fardan al-Maruzi;
- Kitab ghayat al-insaf fi masa'il al-khilaf (concerning differences in fiqh between Abu Salah al-Halabi and al-Sayyid al-Murtada, in this controversy Abu al-Fath defended his teacher's position),

- Hujjat al-`alim fi hay'at al-`alam,
- al-Asbab al-sadda `an ma`rifat al-sawab,
- Damghat al-Nasara (refutation of Abu I-Haytham),
- Kitab al-ghaya (concerning the contingency of the world),
- Riyadat al-`uqul fi muqaddamat al-'usul (incomplete),
- Kitab al-murshid (a selection of Ghurar aI-fawa'id),
- Risalat al-akhawayn,
- Kitab al-ta`ajjub fi l-umma min aghlat al-`amma,
- al-Istibsar,
- Kitab Mur`aradat al-addad bi-ttifaq al-a`dad,
- al-Mas'ala al-Qaysaraniyya,
- Tanzih al-anbiya',
- Kitab al-intiqam (in refutation of Ibn Shadhan al-Ash`ari),
- Kitab al-fadih (astronomy),
- Nazm al-durar fi mabna al-kawakib wa-l-suwar (astronomy),
- Hisab al-Hindi,
- Ma`din al-jawahir wa-riyadat al-khawatir,
- Riyad al-hikam,
- Maw`izat al-`aql li-l-nafs,
- al-Ta`rif bi-wujub haqq al-walidayn,
- Adhkar al-ikhwan bi-wujub haqq al-iman,

- Fadihat al-ikhwan,
- Tuhfa,
- al-Risala al-`Alawiyya,
- Kitab al-jalis (in five volumes containing views on various branches of knowledge),
- Intifa` al-mu'min bima fi aydi al-salatin,
- Kitab al-anis (consisting of two thousand pages regarding various sciences and arts),
- Kitab al-zahid,
- Kitab al-ta'dib,
- al-Kifaya fi l-hidaya,
- al-Majalis (on the art of rhetoric),
- Kitab al-iqna` `inda ta`adhdhur al-ijma` (`ilm al-kalam),
- Kitab al-'usul fi madhhab Al al-Rasul,
- al-Risala al-Hazimiyya,
- al-Risala al-`Amiriyya,
- Mukhtasar al-qawl,
- Mukhtasar tabaqat al-warith,
- al-Risala al-sufiyya,
- Idah `an ahkam al-nikah,
- Risalat al-tanbih (a critique of Abu al-Hasan al-Basri's views on the Imamate),
- Nasihat al-Shi`a,

- Kitab al-bahir,
- Mas'alat al-`adl fi l-muhakama ila l-`aql,
- Hidayat al-mustarshid,
- Kanz al-fawa'id (the most famous work of al-Karajiki), and
- al-Fihrist.

Al-Fihrist of al-Karajiki has been referred by Sayyid Tawus, though the work has not survived to the present day. Kanz al-fawa'id has been published along with seven other treatises of al-Karajiki. This work is so renowned that often al-Karajiki is referred to as Sahib Kanz al-fawa'id. Besides Kanz al-fawa'id, only the following of his books have been published: al-Istibsar, al-Ta`ajjub, Tafdil Amir al-Mu'minin, and al-Ta`rif bi huquq al-walidayn (al-Karajiki's will addressed to his son).[44]

Shaykh `Abd Allah al-Yafi`i, (d. 768/1366) in Mir'at al-jinan, giving the account of the year 449/1057, writes that Abu al-Fath al-Karkhi al-Khimi, a leading Shi`i scholar, author of many books, a grammarian, a lexicographer, an astrologer, a physician, a mutakallim, and one of the outstanding pupils of al-Sharif al-Murtada, died this year.[45] Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani (d. 852/1448) has also paid him tribute in Lisan al-Mizan, and says that Abu Salah died on the second day of Rabi` al-Akhir, 449/1057.[46] Ibn `Imad al-Hanbali, in Shadharat al-dhahab, mentions the same date of death.[47]

From the list of his books and the accounts of historians it is evident that al-Karajiki was a prolific writer and a scholar of varied interests, who excelled in fiqh, hadith, kalam, grammar, literature, astronomy, and mathematics. He travelled widely but lived most of his life in Egypt at Nazil al-Ramla. He trained and educated many outstanding scholars, particularly in Islamic sciences. Al-Karajiki is probably the first Shi`i scholar of Islamic sciences who while being an authority in fiqh combined his theological scholarship with his expert knowledge of physical sciences and mathematics.

6. Abu al-`Abbas al-Najashi

Ahmad b. `Ali b. Ahmad b. `Abbas b. Muhammad b. `Abd Allah b. Ibrahim b. Muhammad b. `Abd Allah al-Asadi al-Najashi (d. 450/1058) is considered the oldest and most authentic Shi`i scholar of `ilm al-Rijal, whose book Rijal al-Najashi has been the most reliable source of information about Shi`i `ulama'. His kunya is Abu al-`Abbas. He belonged to a family of eminent scholars. According to his own account he descended from `Adnan. He writes in his Rijal that his seventh ancestor, in upward order, `Abd Allah al-Najashi was the governor of

Ahwaz and Fars during the reign of al-Mansur, the `Abbasi caliph. He was among the companions of al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, and compiled the Imam's answers to his queries under the title Risalat `Abd Allah al-Najashi'.[48] Abu al-`Abbas's father `Ali b. Ahmad lived in Baghdad and received education under al-Shaykh al-Saduq on his arrival there. He was acclaimed as a faqih and muhaddith. `Ali's father Abu Ya`qub Ahmad b. al-`Abbas was also held in respect as a scholar among the people of Baghdad, from whom Harun b. Musa Tall`ukbari and his own son, father of Abu al-`Abbas, received instruction in religious sciences.[49] Al-Shaykh al-Tusi in his Rijal, under those who do narrate directly from the Imams, says that he was popularly known as Ibn al-Tayalisi; Tall`ukbari received hadith from him in 335/946 and was given permission to narrate them on his authority; his residence was in Baghdad at Darb al-Baqar; al-Najashi's great grandfather, `Abbas b. Muhammad, was a companion and pupil of al-Imam al-Rida, and narrated hadith on the Imam's authority. Al-Tusi mentioned his name in the list of the companions of al-Imam al-Rida, and says that he was from Kufa.[50] Al-Najashi also, for being an Asadi who originally came from Kufa, was called Ibn al-Kufa in Baghdad.[51] Another kunya of his was Abu al-Hasan. He was born in 372/982 and died at Matirabad in Jumada al-Awwal 450/1058.[52]

Al-Najashi frequently travelled to Najaf, to Kufa - which was his birthplace - to Samarra' and probably to Basra, where he attended classes of renowned scholars of his time. Besides these scholars, he received his education formally in Baghdad. At the age of 28 in 400/1009 he visited al-Najaf al-Ashraf, where he heard hadith from al-Husayn b. Ja`far al-Makhzumi, popularly known as Ibn al-Khumri and was awarded an ijaza by him.[53] During the same year, he got a similar ijaza from Muhammad b. Shadhan al-Qazwini, who had come to visit Baghdad. During his several visits to Kufa, he heard hadith from Ja`far b. Bashir al-Bajali, Hasan b. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Haytham al-`Ijli and Ishaq b. al-Hasan al-Aqra`i.[54] His teachers included such eminent scholars as al-Shaykh al-Mufid, Ibn `Abdun (Ahmad b. `Abd al-Wahid), Ahmad b. Muhammad b. `Imran, known as Ibn al-Jundi, Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Musa b. Harun b. Salt al-Ahwazi, Abu al-`Abbas Ahmad b. Nuh b. `Ali b. al-`Abbas b. Nuh al-Sirafi, Husayn b. `Ubayd Allah al-Ghada'iri, `Ali b. Ahmad b. al-Jayyid al-Qummi, Muhammad b. Ja`far Mu'addab, Adib al-Nahwi, Muhammad b. `Uthman Mu`addal al-Nasibi, Abu al-Faraj Muhammad b. `Ali b. Shadhan al-Qazwini, Ahmad b. al-Husayn al-Ghada'iri, Ahmad b. `Ubayd Allah al-Jawhari, al-Hasan b. Ahmad b. Qasim al-Sharif al-`Alawi, `Uthman b. Hatim al-Taghlibi, Muhammad b. `Abd Allah Abu al-Fadl al-Shaybani, Abu Muhammad al-Surani, Abu al-Hasan b. Mahlus al-`Alawi and his own father.[55]

Al-Najashi's main interest was `ilm al-rijal and its allied branches of knowledge. From childhood he took a keen interest in this subject. He not only attended lectures of eminent teachers, but also visited their houses. For instance, he himself narrates in his book on Rijal, under the account of al-Kulayni, that he used to attend the classes of Abu al-Husayn al-Katib al-Kufi at the Mosque of Lu'lu', known as Masjid Naftawayh al-Nahwi. Similarly he recounts his visits to the house of Husayn and Ahmad al-Ghada'iri.

Al-Najashi's written work seems to be confined to a few books despite his vast knowledge. He has mentioned his following books in Rijal al-Najashi:

- Kitab al-Jumu`a,
- Kitab al-Kufa wa-ma fi-ha min al-athar wa-l-fada'il,
- Kitab ansab Bani Nasr b. Qu`ayn wa-ayyamuhum wa-ash`aruhum,
- Kitab mukhtasar al-anwar wa mawadi` al-nujum allati sammatha I- `Arab.[56]

The most important work of al-Najashi is on Rijal; it was not given any name by him but gained fame as Rijal al-Najashi. This book was compiled by him after al-Tusi had compiled his Rijal and al-Fihrist. `Ali Dawani maintains on the basis of contemporary evidence that the task of compiling books on Rijal of the Shi`a was taken up by al-Tusi and al-Najashi after the death of al-Sharif al-Murtada (436/1044) and that al-Najashi's Rijal was completed even later, for it has a mention of al-Tusi's al-Fihrist; most probably it was completed in 448/1056.[57]

Though there is no mention of al-Najashi in al-Fihrist of al-Shaykh al-Tusi, which is a very conspicuous absence, al-Najashi's Rijal is generally acclaimed by most of the authorities in this field as the best Shi`i work in this field to this day, even superior to al-Tusi's Rijal and al-Fihrist. Al-Shahid al-Thani acknowledges that Rijal al-Najashi is superior to all other works with regard to the author's meticulousness and labour in ascertaining the authenticity of early Shi`i rijal.[58] Shaykh `Abd al-Nabi al-Jaza'iri, in al-Hawi, also prefers the book to that of al-Tusi, and adds that all latter scholars accept the authenticity of al-Najashi's work.[59] `Allama Baqir al-Majlisi, in the Fihrist of Bihar al-anwar, places the book on a par with those of al-Tusi. Abu `Ali al-Ha'iri, Wahid al-Bihbahani and `Allama Bahr al-`Ulum consider al-Najashi as one of the greatest authorities of all time on Rijal, and place his book at the highest place in respect of authenticity.[60] Ayatullah Burujirdi is of the view that the Shi`a have only two works on Rijal: those of al-Tusi and al-Najashi.[61] Muhammad Wa`iz Zadeh writes that Ayatullah Burujirdi held the view that Rijal al-Najashi was more reliable than al-Fihrist of al-Tusi, for al-Najashi corrected the lapses and inaccuracies found in the work of al-Tusi.[62] `Allama Bahr al-`Ulum, who considers al-Najashi's book the best in Rijal, bases his assessment on the following six points:[63]

1. Al-Najashi compiled his work after al-Tusi's work was completed, and could remove the latter's lapses.
2. Al-Tusi's varied interests and responsibilities did not leave much time for him to concentrate on the subject of rijal only, while this was al-Najashi's main interest and he had enough time to devote to this work.

3. Al-Najashi's knowledge in history, biography and genealogy was of superior order than that of al-Tusi.

4. Al-Najashi came from Kufa, which was a centre of narrators of hadith.

5. He was well acquainted with Ahmad b. al-Husayn al-Ghada'iri, the greatest authority on rijal in that period.

6. He had access to various chains of ruwat of hadith and could ascertain a fact in many ways, which al-Tusi could not do.

The importance and fame of Rijal al-Najashi eclipsed his other works. Though small in number, his works in other fields were also held in respect. However, his Rijal paved the way for the latter generations of Shi`i scholars who could rely upon his research in dealing with hadith, fiqh, history, and biography.

We do not have any knowledge about the pupils of al-Najashi except one, that is Abu al-Samsam Dhu al-Fiqar b. Muhammad b. Ma`bad al-Hasani al-`Alawi al-Maruzi, through whom Ibn Dawud, an authority on rijal, is related to al-Najashi. When Shaykh Muntajab al-Din al-Razi saw Abu al-Samsam, he was one hundred and fifteen years old.[64]

7. Abu Ya`la al-Ja`fari

Abu Ya`la al-Ja`fari (d. 463/1071), a contemporary of al-Tusi and al-Najashi, and an eminent pupil of al-Mufid, was also al-Mufid's son-in-law. Al-Najashi gives the following account of him:

> Abu Ya`la Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Hamza al-Ja`fari, successor of Shaykh Abu `Abd Allah b. Nu`man (al-Mufid), who occupies his teacher's chair and delivers lectures, is a mutakallim, a faqih, and has many books to his credit.[65]

In Rijal al-Najashi it is mentioned that Abu Ya`la died on the 16th of Ramadan 463/1071.[66] As al-Najashi himself expired in 450/1058, the date of Abu Ya`la's death in his book should have been entered by one of al-Najashi's pupils or a scribe.

Abu Ya`la's rise to his teacher's post in the presence of scores of eminent scholars among al-Mufid's pupils is astonishing and is indicative of his high status as a scholar. It is most probable that Abu Ya`la did not succeed his teacher soon after his death, for at that time Abu Ya`la's age should have been about thirty and it was improbable that he could occupy al-Mufid's place after a considerable gap of time.[67]

According to Qamus al-rijal, it is written in `Umdat al-talib that Abu Ya`la was a descendant of Ja`far al-Tayyar b. Abi Talib, an elder brother of Amir al-Mu'minin `Ali.[68] In later books of rijal, also Abu Ya`la is mentioned as an eminent faqih who trained a number of outstanding scholars.

8. Qadi `Abd al-`Aziz b. al-Barraj

Qadi `Abd al-`Aziz b. al-Barraj (d. 481/1088) was trained and educated by al-Sharif al-Murtada, who awarded him a monthly stipend of eight dinars. Ibn Shahr Ashub, in Ma`alim al-`ulama', writes about him:

> He has written books on usul (jurisprudence) and furu` (laws) of fiqh. On furu` he wrote al-Jawahir, al-Ma`alim, al-Minhaj, al-Kamil, Rawdat al-nafs fi ahkam al-`ibadat al-khams, al-Muqarrab, al-Muhadhdhab, al-Tasrif and a commentary on Jumal al-`ilm wa-I-`amal by al-Murtada.[69]

Shaykh Muntajab al-Din al-Razi adds to this list some other titles: al-Mu`tamad, `Imad al-muhtaj fi manasik al-hajj, and al-Mu`jiz. He writes that Abu al-Qasim `Abd Allah b. Nahrir b. `Abd al-`Aziz b. al-Barraj was an outstanding Shi`i scholar and faqih, and held the post of qadi at Tarabulus (Tripoli).[70]

`Allama Bahr al-`Ulum mentions his name as `Abd al-`Aziz b. Bahr according to an ijaza issued by al-`Allama al-Hilli to Ibn Zuhra. With reference to an ijaza issued by al-Shahid al-Thani, he says that Ibn al-Barraj was responsible for the affairs of justice at Tarabulus for twenty or thirty years. He further says that among his pupils were Shams al-Islam al-Hasan b. al-Husayn b. Babawayb (al-Hasaka), al-Shaykh al-Faqih al-Husayn b. `Abd al-`Aziz, al-Shaykh `Abd al-Rahman b. Ahmad al-Khuza`i, `Abd al-Jabbar b. `Abd Allah al-Razi and `Ubayd Allah b. al-Hasan b. Babawayh (father of Muntajab al-Din al-Razi).[71]

The author of Rawdat al-jannat writes, with reference to Riyad al-`ulama', that Ibn al-Barraj was a pupil of al-Sayyid al-Murtada from 429/1037 up to his death, and he spent the major part of his student life under al-Shaykh al-Tusi. He returned to Tarabulus in 438/1046, where he died on 9th Shaban 381/991 at the ripe age of eighty odd years. He was born and brought up in Egypt. The author of Rawdat al-jannat gave this account with reference to Nizam al-aqwal of Nizam al-Din al-Qarashi, adding that Ibn al-Barraj narrated hadith on the authority of al-Sayyid al-Murtada, al-Shaykh al-Tusi, Abu al-Fath al-Karajiki and Taqi al-Din b. Najm Abu al-Salah al-Halabi, and from him narrated Muhammad b. `Ali b. al-Hasan al-Halabi.[72]

Ibn al-Barraj officiated as the representative of al-Tusi at Tarabulus, situated presently in north Lebanon. After his death, `Abd al-`Aziz b. al-Kamil al-Tarabulusi - who was also a

scholar of eminence in his own right - was appointed to the position of qadi in his place.[73]

Notes:

[1] Shaykh al-Ta'ifa Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi, Rijal al-Tusi, (Najaf, 1380/1961), p.470.

[2] Ibid., pp.470-71 (note).

[3] Abu al-`Abbas al-Najashi, Rijal al-Najashi, (Qum, 1407/1986), p.69.

[4] Al-`Allama al-Hilli, Rijal al-`Allama al-Hilli, ed. al-Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq Bahr al-`Ulum, (Qum, 1402/1981), p. 50; Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, Hadiyyat al-ahbab, (Tehran, 1363 Sh.), p. 226; Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, al-Fawa'id al-Ridawiyya (Qum), p.140.

[5] Al-Dhahabi, Mizan al-i`tidal (Cairo, 1382/1962), vol.1, 541.

[6] Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani, Lisan al-Mizan (Hyderabad) vol.2, 288.

[7] `Ali Dawani, Mafakhir-e Islam, (Tehran, 1363 Sham.), vol.3, 229-39.

[8] Ibid, p.231.

[9] Ibid, p.233.

[10] Ibid, p.235; cf. Musaffa l-maqal.

[11] Ibid,p.235.

[12] Ibid, p.235.

[13] Ibid,p.236.

[14] Ibid, p.237.

[15] Ibid, p.238; cf. Aqa Buzurg al-Tehrani, al-Dhari`a, vol.10, p.88.

[16] Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, Kitab al-Irshad, trans. I.K.A. Howard, (London,

1982), p.268.

[17] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.303; cf. al-Darajat al-rafi`a, p.484.

[18] Ibid., p.307.

[19] Ibid., p.305; cf. `Umdat al-talib, p.296.

[20] Ibid., p.316; cf. al-Darajat al-rafi`a, p.484.

[21] Ibn Shahr Ashub aI-Mazandarani, Ma`alim al-`ulama', (Najaf, 1380/1961), p.68; al-Fawa'id al-Ridawiyya, op. cit., p.323.

[22] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.317.

[23] Ibid., p. 308; cf. Shaykh Muntajab al-Din, al-Fihrist (included in Bihar al-anwar).

[24] Ibn Shahr Ashub, op. cit., 135-6.

[25] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.309; cf. Naqd al-rijal, p.156.

[26] Ibid, p.309; cf. Khulasat al-`Allama, p.86.

[27] Ibid., p. 310.

[28] Ibid., pp.314-5.

[29] Ibid., p.310; cf. Rijal al-`Allama Bahr al-`Ulum, vol.2, p.12 (note).

[30] Ibid., p.311; Rijal Bahr al-`Ulum, p. 18 (note).

[31] Ibid., p. 312.

[32] Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, al-Fawa'id al-Ridawiyya, p.203.

[33] Ibid.

[34] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.314.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., p.314.

[37] Yaqut al-Hamawi, Mu`jam al-buldan, (Beirut), vol.2. pp.282-4.

[38] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.457.

[39] Ibid., pp. 318-21.

[40] Rijal al-Tusi; op. cit., p. 457.

[41] Ibn Shahr Ashub, op. cit., p.29.

[42] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.322.

[43] Ibid., pp.325-6.

[44] Ibid., pp.331-4.

[45] Ibid., p.336; cf. Mir'at al-jinan, vol.3, 70.

[46] Ibid., p.336; cf. Lisan al-mizan, vol.5, 300.

[47] Ibid., p.336; cf. Shadharat al-dhahab, vol.3, 283.

[48] Al-Najashi, op. cit., p.101.

[49] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.348.

[50] Ibid., p.349; cf. Rijal al-Tusi, p.446.

[51] Ibid., p.349.

[52] Ibid., p.350.

[53] Ibid., p.355; cf. al-Najashi.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., pp.364-5; cf. al-Najashi.

[56] Al-Najashi, p.101.

[57] `Ali Dawani, p.357.

[58] Ibid., p. 351.

[59] Ibid., p. 351.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., p.358.

[62] Ibid., p.358-9.

[63] Ibid., p.352-3.

[64] Ibid., p.365.

[65] Al-Najashi, op. cit., p.404.

[66] Ibid.

[67] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.388.

[68] Ibid, p.390.

[69] Ibn Shahr Ashub, op. cit., p.80.

[70] `Ali Dawani, op. cit., p.397.

[71] Ibid., pp.397-8.

[72] Ibid., p.398.

[73] Ibid., p.399.

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The Concept of Love in the Shi'i Creed

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Love is one of the sublimest and most appealing of concepts in Shi'ism in particular and Islamic culture and belief in general. In Shi'i belief, mahabbah or hubb, and related words like mawaddah and waliyah, play a very significant and profound role, to the extent that, to cite one instance, it is asserted to be the fundamental basis of the faith. In a famous hadith, the Prophet (s) is reported as questioning his followers concerning the "firmest handhold of faith" (awthaq 'urwat al-iman). When they cannot reply, he declares:

> The firmest handhold of faith is to love for the sake of God and to hate for the sake of God, to befriend God's friends and to renounce His enemies.' [1]

In another tradition, Fudayl ibn al-Yasar, a disciple, asks al-Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, whether love and hate derive from faith; he replies:

> Is faith anything but love and hate? [2]

It is also narrated that al-Imam al-Baqir, may peace be upon him, stated that:

> Religion (din) is love and love is religion. [3]

As these statements and traditions indicate, love plays an important role in Shi'i doctrine. Hence it deserves our close attention in order that we may discover the real meaning of the concept.

First of all, some questions come to the mind. What is the kind of love that has been emphasized by Islam in general and Shi'ism in particular? Who is the object of this special kind of love? Why should the believers have this kind of love and what purpose does it serve?

Love, in Shi'i doctrine, includes three interrelated categories: Love for God, love for the Prophet and his Household, and love for the faithful.

Love for Allah:

According to Islamic teaching, God is the highest and foremost object of love. The Holy Qur'an says:

> Say: "If your fathers and your sons, your brethren and your wives, your kinsfolk and the property you have acquired, the commerce you fear may slacken and the dwellings which you love-if these are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and striving in His way, then wait till God brings His command; God does not guide an ungodly people." (9:24)

This ayah clearly indicates that the love of God has precedence over everything and whatever that one may love in one's life. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an points out in another verse that the believers' love of God is greater than that of anything else, but that some people love certain things as much as they love God:

> And there are some among men who take for themselves objects of worship besides God. whom they love as they love God, and those who believe are stronger in love for God ... (2:165)

That is, God is the source of all love just as He is the source of all that exists. That love is an attribute of God is affirmed implicitly by numerous Qur'anic verses. Hence love for God is the foundation of belief, the foundation on which man is to establish the principles of his faith. This is also affirmed by reason. It may be noted that

(a) human nature aspires to perfection and beauty, and God is absolute perfection and eternal beauty; thus it is an innate quality of the human nature to love God;

(b) men by nature love whoever does good to them, and they appreciate such favour and benevolence, as Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, said:

> Generosity and magnanimity enslave men. [4]

Now, as God is the source of all being, of all generosity and benevolence, man, by virtue of his nature, loves God. The Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, said:

> Love Allah because He has done good to you and He has bestowed favours upon you. [5]

It is narrated that God declared to Moses and David, may peace be upon them: "Love Me and

endear Me to the people." When they asked Him how they could endear Him to the people, He replied:

> Remind them about My favours and bounties, for they do not recall My favours without the feeling of gratitude. [6]

This relationship of love between man and his Creator is reciprocal, and the intensity of a people's love for God is indicative of God's love for them, as indicated by the following verse:

> God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him. (5:54)

This love stands for a spiritual relationship between God and the God-loving people wherewith they are ever made aware of the beneficence and mercy of their Lord. It is narrated in a hadith qudsi that when God loves someone He becomes his ears, his eyes, his tongue, and his hands:

> When I love him, then I shall be his ears with which he listens, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks, and his hands with which he holds; if he calls Me, I shall answer him, and if he asks Me, I shall give him. [7]

Aside from the fact that one who loves God is loved by Him, a real love for God prompts one to perform the best of deeds. Reason and nature dictate that if someone really loves God, he would act in a manner that is pleasing to God. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says:

> Say: "If you love God, then follow me, and God will love you and forgive you your sins," and God is Forgiving and Merciful. (3:31)

This ayah indicates the interrelation between love, as an inner state, and emulating the Prophet, which is an outward action. Moreover, it implies that no one may neglect his religious obligations under the pretext of love for God.

Love for the Prophet:

After God, the Prophet, Muhammad, may God bless Him and his Household, is the one whom the faithful love. It is evident that the love for him is a ramification of the love for God. It is stated in traditions that God loves the Prophet and his Household as the ideals of human perfection so much that He created the heavens and the earth and whatever is in them out of His love for them. In the Hadith al-Kisa', it is narrated by Fatimah, may peace be upon her:

> When they, the Ahl al-Bayt, gathered under the kisa', the Almighty said: "Let it be known to you, My angels and those who are in the heavens, that I have not created the heavens and the earth and what is in them, but for My love for the Five Ones under the kisa." [8]

The Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, said to his followers:

> Love me because of the love of God. [9]

We love the Prophet as he is the beloved of Him, and He has directed us to love him. This is the first and the most important reason for loving the Prophet. Further, he is the Perfect Man and personifies the highest degrees of such virtues as generosity, greatness, moral sublimity and wisdom. Hence human nature is fascinated by his perfect being and loves him. Thirdly, he brought us the most significant and essential gift which benefits us both in this world and the next and gives us true life. [10]

For these reasons, and because of the many verses and traditions which declare the necessity of loving the Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, it is obligatory for all Muslims to love him as much as they love themselves and even more, as according to the Qur'an:

> The Prophet has a greater right on the faithful than they have on themselves. (33:6)

Love for the Prophet's Household:

As part of the love for the Prophet, love for the Household of the Prophet is also necessary for all believers. In fact, it is a test of the genuineness of one's love for the Prophet, and it is declared in traditions that it is the first thing which they would be questioned about on the Day of Resurrection. [11]

As regards the necessity and importance of this love, there are more than three hundred ayahs and hadith found in both Sunni and Shi'i sources. In all, they indicate that the main role of this love is to nourish faith. It is narrated that the Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, said:

> There is a basis for every thing, and the basis of Islam is the love for us, the People of the Household. [12]

In another hadith he is reported to have said:

> One who wants to partake of the firmest handhold (of faith) should abide by the

> love of 'Ali and my Household. [13]

He also said:

> Love of them (my Household) is a sign of faith, and enmity towards them is a sign of unbelief. Whosoever loves them, loves God and His Messenger. And whosoever harbours enmity towards them is enemy of God and His Messenger." [14]

It is narrated that al-Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, said:

> For every kind of worship there is another which surpasses it, and the love for us, the people of the Household, is the best form of worship. [15]

On the basis of the traditions that have been cited and many others like them, it is clear that the love for the Household of the Messenger is a necessary part of every Muslim's faith. This is further confirmed by taking into consideration that the love of the Household is considered by the Qur'an as the mark of gratitude for the guiding mission of the Prophet. God says:

> Say (O Muhammad, unto mankind): "I do not ask you a wage for this except the love of my kinsfolk." (42:23)

When the Holy Prophet was asked by his followers as to who were his near of kin" whose love God has made obligatory on all Muslims, the Prophet replied; "Fatimah, 'Ali, al-Hasan and al-Husayn." [16]

The Shi'ah believe that, in accordance with this ayah, it is necessary for every Muslim, from the point of view of his faith, to love them. For, in this verse, God has told mankind to love them. On the other hand, God has ordered us to love them because they merit it, as the highest exemplars of obedience to the commands of God, their exalted stations in the eyes of God, and their purity from all traces of polytheism, sin, and everything that deprives His servants of God's mercy. In summary, if God instructs all people to love certain human beings, they must be the best among them in virtue and the sublimest of His creatures, otherwise they would not deserve to be loved, and God would never prefer some person to another for no reason, or favour someone who has no merit.

However, it may be asked whether love as an emotional attachment is capable of producing any profound results or capable of motivating deeds of higher religious and moral worth. In my opinion, love not only operates on an emotional level but can be a real agent that prompts man towards virtuous action.

The real love which has been emphasized by both the Qur'an and Sunnah is not merely an emotional relation between the lover and the object of love without any actual relevance to one's conduct of life. That it is a love which produces piety and encourages the lover to righteous action is confirmed by the Islamic tradition. It is stated in a hadith:

> Do not neglect righteous action and diligence in worship by relying on the love of Muhammad's Household; and do not neglect the love of Muhammad's Household for reliance on righteous action and diligence in worship, because none of them will be accepted without the other. [17]

Al-Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, said:

> One who follows someone would strive to emulate him. [18]

Accordingly, God commands the faithful to love the Household and to have recourse to them in order that they may learn their religious obligations from the Imams of the Prophet's family. In this relation, the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his Household, is reported to have said:

> Whoever aspires to live my life, to die my death, to enter the Paradise that my Lord has promised me, and to grasp the handhold which my Lord has appointed, should take 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his successors after him, as his masters, because they will never cause you to enter the doors of misguidance, nor will they divert you from the gates of guidance. Never try to teach them, since they are more knowledgeable than you. I have asked my Lord never to separate them from the Book until they meet me by the side of the Pool (hawd) ... [19]

Al Imam al Sadiq, may peace be upon him, also said:

> God has ordained our guardianship, and He has made loving us an obligation. By God, we don't say anything out of our desires, and we don't do anything according to our whims; we don't say anything but what our Lord, the Almighty and the Glorious, says. [20]

They have been given authority and God has ordered people to obey the. They are the witness for mankind, the doors leading to the way of God, the guides to His path, the guardians of His knowledge, the interpreters of His revelations, the pillars of the teaching of Divine Unity, and the custodians of His Wisdom. The Holy Qur'an refers to them in these words:

> Honoured servants, who speak not until He has spoken and who act by His command. (21:26-27)

That is why God has urged the faithful to love them, to seek them and follow them, obeying their commands.

Thus befriending them, which is obligatory for all Muslims according to the Holy Qur'an, would lead the believers to fulfil their duties. A real love, as was mentioned earlier, encourages the lover to act according to the beloved's will and wishes. Therefore, Muslims, by emulating the Prophet's Household, become real believers. Hence the 'wages' of prophecy which the faithful have been asked to pay, ultimately return to the believers themselves. Hence the following verse of Surat Saba' says:

> Say (O Muhammad): "Whatever reward I have asked of you is only for yourselves; my reward is only with God, and He is the witness over all things." (34:47)

We may conclude that love plays a great, if not the greatest, formative role in religious faith in the Shi'i creed and is the uniting principle of its universe of religious ideas. So far, we have seen that this principle unites a vast collection of religious ideas each of which relates to the others, and that this totality impels the believer towards a higher form of life.

The principle of love frees religious devotion from a dispassionate and lifeless state, and inspires it with a new refreshing spirit. This is the meaning of the following statement of the Holy Prophet, may God bless him and his Household:

> O servant of God, let your love and hate be for the sake of God, because no one can attain to the wilayah of God without that, and no one shall find the taste of faith without that, though his prayers and fast be great in number. [21]

I would like to conclude this discussion with a hadith of Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, wherein he states:

> Most certainly the best and most delightful of things in Paradise is the love of God and love for the sake of God and the glorification of God. God, the Almighty and the Glorious, says "And the last of their cry shall be: 'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [22]

Notes:

[1] Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, "kitab al-iman wa al-kufr," bab al-hubb fi Allah wa ai-bughd fi Allah," hadith 6, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, ii, p. 126.

[2] Ibid., hadith 5, p. 125.

[3] Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, 'kitab al-iman wa al-kufr," "bab al-hubb fi Allah wa al-bughd fi Allah," Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, lxvi, p. 238.

[4] Al-Amidi, Tasnif Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, Qum: Maktab al-I'ilm al-Islami, p. 100%

[5] Al-Daylami, Irshad al-qulub, p. 226.

[6] Al-Majlisi, al-Bihar, xiii, 351; xiv, 38.

[7] Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, iv, p. 54.

[8] Al-Qadi Nur Allah al-Shushtari, Ihqaq al-haqq, ii, p. 555.

[9] Al-Daylami, Irshad al Qulub, p. 226.

[10] The Qur'an, 33:6.

[11] Al-Majlisi, al-Bihar, "kitab al-Imamah," "bab thawab hubihim wa nasrihim wawilayatihim, xxvii, p. 82.

[12] Al-Majlisl, al-Bihar, "kitab al-Imamah," "bab thawab hubihim wa nasrihim wawilayatihim," hadith 22, xxvii, p. 82.

[13] Ibid., hadith 14, p. 79.

[14] M. R. Muzaffar, The Faith of Shi'i Islam, p. 36.

[15] Al-Majlisi, al-Bihar, xxvii, p. 91.

[16] Al-Majlisi, al-Bihar, xxiii, p. 233; from al-Zamakhshari, al-Kashshaf, iv, p. 172.

[17] Al-Qummi, Safinat al-Bihar, i, p. 201.

[18] Al-Majlisi, al-Bihar, xxvii, p. 108.

[19] al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, i, part II, p. 122.

[20] Majlisi, al-Bihar, xxvii, p. 102.

[21] Majlisi, al-Bihar, xxvii, p. 54.

[22] Ibid., lxvi, p.251; al-Qur'an, 10:10.

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The Greater Jihad

Imam Ruhullah al Musawi al Khumayni - qudisa sirruh

Translated from the Persian by

Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen & 'Azim Sarvdalir

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Yet another year of our lives has passed. You young people are advancing toward old age, and we old people toward death. During this academic year you have become aware of the extent of your learning and study. You know how much you have acquired and how high the edifice of your education has been raised. However, with respect to moral refinement, the acquisition of religious manners, divine teachings and purification of the soul, what have you done? What positive steps have you taken? Have you had any thought of refinement or self-reformation? Have you had any programme in this field?

Unfortunately, I must submit that you have not done anything striking, and have not taken any great steps with regard to the reformation and refinement of the self.

Recommendations for the Seminaries Of Religious Learning

Simultaneous with the study of scholarly matters, the centres of religious learning are in need of teaching and learning in morals and spirituality. It is necessary to have moral guides, trainers for the spiritual faculties, and sessions for advice and counseling. Programmes in ethics and moral reform classes in manners and refinement, instruction in divine teaching, which is the principle aim of the mission of the prophets, Peace be upon them, must be officially instituted in the seminaries.

Unfortunately, scant attention is paid in the centres of learning to these essential issues. Spiritual studies are declining, so that in the future, it is feared, the seminaries might not be able to train scholars of ethics, refined and polished counselors, or godly men. Occupation with discussion and inquiry into elementary problems does not allow the opportunity for the basic and fundamental topics attended to by the Noble Quran and of the great Prophet ('s) and the other prophets and saints (awliya'), Peace be with them. The eminent jurisconsults and

high-ranking professors, who are noteworthy in the scholarly community, had better try, in the course of their lessons and discussions, to train and refine people and to be more concerned with spiritual and ethical topics. For the seminary students it is also necessary that in their efforts to acquire higher virtues and refinement of the soul that they give sufficient weight to their important duties and momentous responsibilities.

Recommendations for the Seminary Students

You who today are studying in these seminaries, and who shall tomorrow take charge of the leadership and guidance of society, do not imagine that your only duty is to learn a handful of terms, for you have other duties as well. In these seminaries you must build and train yourselves so that when you go to a city or village you will be able to guide the people there and show them refinement. It is expected that when you depart from the centre for the study of religious law, you yourselves will be refined and cultivated, so that you will be able to cultivate the people and train them according to Islamic ethical manners and precepts. If, God forbid, you were not to reform yourselves in the centre of learning, and you were not to realize spiritual ideals, then-may Allah protect us-everywhere you went, people would be perverted, and you would have given them a low opinion of Islam and of the clergy.

You have a heavy responsibility. If you do not fulfill your duty in the seminaries, if you do not plan your refinement, and if you merely pursue the learning of a few terms and issues of law and jurisprudence, then God protect us from the damage that you might cause in the future to Islam and Islamic society. It is possible-may Allah protect us-for you to pervert and mislead the people. If due to your actions, deeds and unfair behaviour, one person loses his way and leaves Islam, you would be guilty of the greatest of the major sins, and it would be difficult for your repentance to be accepted. Likewise, if one person finds guidance, then according to a narration "it is better than all that the sun doth shine upon." [1] Your responsibility is very heavy. You have duties other than those of the laity. How many things are permissible for the laity, which are not allowed for you, and may possibly be forbidden! People do not expect you to perform many permissible deeds, to say nothing of low unlawful deeds, which if you were to perform them, God forbid, people would form a bad opinion of Islam and of the clerical community.

The trouble is here: if the people witness your actions as contrary to what is expected, they become deviated from religion. They turn away from the clergy, not from an individual. If only they would turn away from one person and form a low opinion of just that person!

But if they see an unbecoming action contrary to decorum on the part of a single cleric, they do not examine it and analyze it, that at the same time that among businessmen there are unrighteous and perverted people, and among office workers corruption and ugly deeds may be seen, it is possible that among the clergy there is also one or a few impious or deviant persons. Hence, if a grocer does something wrong, it is said that such and such a grocer is a

wrongdoer. If a druggist is guilty of an ugly deed, it is said that such and such a druggist is an evildoer. However, if a preacher performs an unbecoming act, it is not said that such and such a preacher is deviant, it is said that preachers are bad! The responsibilities of the learned are very heavy; the 'ulama have more duties than other people.

If you review the chapters related to the responsibilities of the 'ulama in Usul al-Kafi and Wasail[2] you will see how they describe the heavy responsibilities and serious obligations of the learned. It is narrated that when the soul reaches the throat, there is no longer any chance for repentance, and in that state one's repentance will not be accepted, although God accepts the repentance of the ignorant until the last minute of their lives. [3] In another narration it is reported that seventy sins will be forgiven of one who is ignorant before one sin is forgiven of an 'alim. [4] This is because the sin of an 'alim is very harmful to Islam and to Islamic society. If a lay and ignorant person commits a sin, he only wins misfortune for himself. However, if an 'alim becomes deviant, if he becomes involved in ugly deeds, he perverts an entire world ('alam). He has injured Islam and the 'ulama' of Islam. [5] There is also a narration according to which the people of hell suffer from the stench of an 'alim whose deeds to not accord with his knowledge. [6] For this very reason, in this world there is a great difference between an 'alim and an ignorant person with regard to benefit and injury to Islam and to the Islamic community. If an 'alim is deviant, it is possible that the community will become infected by deviation. And if an 'alim is refined, and he observes the morality and manners of Islam, he will refine and guide the community.

In some of the towns to which I went during the summer, I saw that the people of a town were well mannered with religious morals. The point is this, that they had an 'alim who was righteous and pious. If an 'alim who is pious and righteous lives in a community, town or state, his very existence will raise the refinement and guidance of the people of that realm, even if he does not verbally propagate and guide. [7] We have seen people whose existence causes lessons to be learned, merely seeing them and looking at them raises one's awareness.

At present in Tehran, about which I have some information, the neighbourhoods differ from one another. Neighbourhoods in which a pure and refined 'alim lives have righteous people with strong faith. In another neighbourhood where a corrupt deviant person wears the turban, and has become the prayer leader, and set up shop, you will see that the people there have been misled, and have been polluted and perverted. This is the same pollution from the stench of which the people of hell suffer. This is the same stench which the evil 'alim, the 'alim without action, the perverted 'alim has brought in this world, and the smell of it causes the people of hell to suffer. It is not because something is added to him there; that which occurs to this 'alim in the next world is something which has been prepared in this world. Nothing is given to us except that which we have done. If an 'alim is corrupt and evil, he corrupts the society, although in this world we are not able to smell the stench of it. However, in the next world the stench of it will be perceived. But a lay person is not able to bring such corruption and pollution into the Islamic society. A lay person would never allow himself to proclaim

that he was an Imam or the Mahdi, to proclaim himself a prophet, or to have received revelation. It is a corrupt 'alim who corrupts the world: "If an 'alim is corrupt, a world ('alam) is corrupted." [8]

The Importance of the Refinement and Purification of the Soul

Those who have constructed (their own) religions, causing the straying and deviation of masses of peoples, have for the most part been scholars. Some of them even studied and disciplined themselves in the centres of learning. [9] The head of one of the heretical sects studied in these very seminaries of ours. However, since his learning was not accompanied by refinement and purification, since he did not advance on the path toward God, and since he did not remove the pollution from himself, he bore the fruit of ignominy. If man does not cast pollution from the core of his soul, not only will whatever studying and learning he does be of no benefit by itself, rather it will actually be harmful. When knowledge enters in this evil centre, the product will be evil, root and branch, an evil tree. However much these concepts are accumulated in a black impure heart, there will be greater obscurity. In a soul which is unrefined, knowledge is a dark cover: Al-'ilm huwa al-hijab al- akbar (Knowledge is the greatest veil). Therefore, the vice of a corrupt 'alim is greater and more dangerous for Islam than all vices. Knowledge is light, but in a black, corrupt heart it spreads wide the skirts of darkness and blackness. A knowledge which would draw a man closer to God, in a worldly soul takes him far distant from the sanctum of the Almighty.

Even the science of tawhid (i.e. the higher gnostic teaching), if it is for anything other than God, becomes a veil of darkness, for it is a preoccupation with that which is other than God. If one memorizes and recites the Noble Quran with all the fourteen different readings, if it is for anything other than God, it will not bring him anything but obscurity and distance from Haqq ta'ala (God). If you study and work hard, you may become an 'alim, but you had better know that there is a big difference between being an 'alim and being refined. The late Shaykh, our teacher, [10] may Allah be pleased with him, said, "That which is said, 'How easy it is to become a mullah; how difficult it is to become a man,' is not correct. It should be said, 'How difficult it is to become a mullah, and it is impossible to become a man!' " The acquisition of the virtues and human nobilities and standards is a difficult and great duty which rests upon your shoulders. Do not suppose now that you are engaged in studying the religious sciences, and learning fiqh (the study of Islamic law), which is the most honourable of these sciences, that you can take it easy otherwise, and that you have carried out your responsibilities and duties. If you do not have a pure intention of approaching God, these sciences will be of no benefit at all. If your studies-may Allah protect us-are not for the sake of God, and are for the sake of personal desires-the acquisition of position and the seats of authority, titles and prestige-then you will accumulate nothing for yourself but harm and disaster. This terminology you are learning, if it is for anything but God, it is harm and disaster. This terminology, as much as it increases, if it is not accompanied by refinement and fear of God (taqwa), then it will end in harm in this world and the next for the Muslim community.

Merely knowing terminology is not effective. Even the science of tawhid, if it is not accompanied with purity of the soul, will bring disaster.

How many individuals have been learned in the science of tawhid, and have perverted entire groups of people! How many individuals have had the very same knowledge that you have, or even more knowledge, but were deviant and did not reform themselves, so that when they entered the community, they perverted many and led them astray!

This dry terminology, if it is not accompanied by piety (taqwa) and refinement of the soul, as much as it accumulates in one's mind it will only lead to the expansion of pride and conceit in the realm of the soul. The unfortunate 'alim who is defeated by his own conceit cannot reform himself or his community, and it will result in nothing but harm to Islam and the Muslims. And after years of studying and wasting religious funding, enjoying his Islamic salary and fringe benefits, he will become an obstacle in the way of Islam and the Muslims. Nations will be perverted by him. The result of these lessons and discussions and the time spent in the seminary will be the prevention of the introduction to the world of Islam and the truths of the Quran; rather, it is possible that his existence will be a barrier preventing the society from coming to know Islam and spirituality.

I am not saying that you should not study, that you should not acquire knowledge. But you have to pay attention that if you want to be a useful and effective member of society and Islam and lead a nation to awareness of Islam and to defend the fundamentals of Islam, it is necessary that the basis of jurisprudence be strengthened and that you gain mastery of the subject. If, God forbid, you fail to study, then it is forbidden for you to remain in the seminary. You may not use the religious salary of the students of the religious sciences. Of course, the acquisition of knowledge is necessary, although in the same way that you take pains with the problems of fiqh and usul (law and jurisprudence), you must make efforts in the path of self- reformation. Every step forward which you take in the acquisition of knowledge, should be matched by a step taken to beat down the desires of the soul, to strengthen one's spiritual powers, to acquire nobility of character, and to gain spirituality and piety.

The learning of these sciences in reality is an introduction to the refinement of the soul and the acquisition of virtue, manners and divine knowledge. Do not spend your entire life with the introduction, so that you leave aside the conclusion. You are acquiring these sciences for the sake of a high and holy aim: knowing God and refining the self. You should make plans to realize the results and effects of your work, and you should be serious about reaching your fundamental and basic goal.

When you enter the seminary, before anything else, you should plan to reform yourselves. While you are in the seminary, along with your studies, you should refine yourselves, so that when you leave the seminary and become the leader of a people in a city or district, they may

profit from you, take advice from you, and reform themselves by means of your deeds and manners and your ethical virtues. Try to reform and refine yourselves before you enter among the people. If now, while you are unencumbered, you do not reform yourselves, on the day when people come before you, you will not be able to reform yourselves.

Many things ruin people and keep them from studying and purifying themselves, and one of them, for some, is this very beard and turban! When the turban becomes a bit large, and the beard gets long, if one has not refined oneself, this can hinder one's studies, and restrict one. It is difficult to trample the carnal self under one's feet, and to sit at the feet of another for lessons. Shaykh Tusi, [11] may Allah have mercy on him, at the age of fifty-two would go to classes, while between the ages of twenty and thirty, he wrote some of his books! His Tahdhib was possibly written during this period. [12] Yet at the age of fifty-two he attended the classes of the late Sayyid Murtada [13] and thereby achieved such station as he did.

God forbid that prior to acquiring good habits and strengthening one's spiritual powers that one's beard should turn a bit white and that his turban should get big, so that he would lose the blessings of knowledge and spirituality. So work, before your beards become white; before you gain the attention of the people, think about your state! God forbid that before a person develops himself, that people should pay heed to him, that he should become a personality and have influence among the people, causing him to lose his soul. Before you lose hold of the reins of your self, develop and reform yourself! Adorn yourselves with good traits, and remove your vices! Become sincere in your lessons and discussions, so that you may approach God! If one does not have sincere intentions, one will be kept at a distance from the divine precincts. Beware that, after seventy years, when the book of your deeds is opened, Allah forbid, that you should have been far from God Almighty for seventy years.

Have you heard the story of the 'stone' which fell into hell? Only after seventy years was the sound of its hitting the bottom of hell heard. According to a narration, the Prophet, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his Progeny, said that it was an old man who died after seventy years, and during this seventy years he was falling into hell. [14]

Be careful that in the seminary that you do not reach hell by your own labour of fifty years, more or less, and the sweat of your brow! You had better think! Make plans in the field of refinement and purification of the soul, and reformation of character. Choose a teacher of morals for yourself; and arrange sessions for advice, counsel, and admonition. You cannot become refilled by yourself. If there is no place in the seminary for moral counselors and sessions of advice and exhortation, it will be doomed to annihilation.

How could it be that fiqh and usul should require teachers for lessons and discussions, and that for every science and skill a teacher is necessary, and no one becomes an expert or learned in any field spontaneously and by himself, yet with regard to the spiritual and ethical sciences, which are the goal of the mission of the prophets and are among the most subtle and

exact sciences, they do not require teaching and learning, and one may obtain them oneself without a teacher?! I have heard on numerous occasions that the late Shaykh Ansari, [15] was a student of a great Sayyid [16] who was a teacher of ethics and spirituality.

The prophets of God were raised in order to train people, to develop humanity, and to deliver them from ugliness, filth, corruption, pollution and moral turpitude, and to-acquaint them with virtue and good manners: "I was raised in order to complete noble virtues" (makarim al-akhlaq). [17] This knowledge which was considered by God the Almighty to be so important that he raised the prophets for it, is now considered unfashionable in the seminaries for our clergy. No one gives it the importance of which it is worthy. Due to the lack of spiritual and gnostic works in the seminaries, material and worldly problems have come so far as to penetrate the clergy (ruhaniyat), and has kept many of them away from holiness and spirituality (ruhaniyat) so that they do not even know what ruhaniyat means, nor what the responsibilities of a cleric are and what kind of programmes they should have. Some of them merely plan to learn a few words, return to their own localities, or somewhere else, and to grab facilities and position, and to wrestle with others (for them)-like the one who said: "Let me study Sharh e Lum'ah and then I will know what to do with the village chief!" Do not be this way, that from the beginning you aim to win someone's position by studying, and that you intend to be the chief of some town or village. You may achieve your selfish desires and Satanic expectations, but for yourself and the Islamic community you will gain nothing except harm and misfortune. Mu'awiyah was also chief for a long time, but for himself he achieved no result or benefit except curses and loathing and the chastisement of the afterlife.

It is necessary for you to refine yourselves, so that when you become the chief of a community or a clan, you will be able to refine them as well In order to be able to take steps toward the reform and development of a community, your aim should be service to Islam and Muslims. If you take steps for the sake of God, God the Almighty is the turner of the heart He will turn hearts in favour of you:

Surely for those who believe and do good deeds, the Merciful (al-Rahman) will bring, about love. (19:96)

Take some trouble on the way to God, devote yourselves; God will not leave you unpaid; He will reward you, if not in this world, then in the next. If aside from Him, you have no reward in this world, what could be better? This world is nothing. This pomp and these personalities will come to an end after a few days, like a dream that passes before the eyes of man, but the otherworldly reward is infinite and never ending.

Warnings to the Seminaries

It is possible that by spreading poison and evil propaganda impure hands have portrayed ethical and reformatory programmes as without importance and have presented going to the

minbar (pulpit, pronounced as 'mimbar') for giving advice and making sermons as contrary to a scholarly station, and they inhibit the work of the great scholarly personalities who have the station of reforming and refining the seminaries by calling them 'mimbar' and (mere sermonizers). Today, in some seminaries, going to the mimbar and giving sermons may even be considered disgraceful! They forget that that the Commander of the Faithful, Peace be with him, was mimbari (a sermonizer) and from the minbar he would admonish people, make them aware of things, raise their consciousnesses, and guide them. Other Imams, Peace be with them, were also this way.

Perhaps secret agents have injected this evil in order to exterminate spirituality and ethics from the seminaries, so that as a result our seminaries should become corrupt and dissolute; that, God forbid, forming gangs, selfishness, hypocrisy, and disputes should penetrate the seminaries; that the members of the seminaries fight with each other, close ranks against one another, and that they insult and belie one another; that they become discredited in the Islamic community, so that the foreigners and enemies of Islam are able to get hold of the seminaries and destroy them. The ill- intentioned know that the people support the seminaries, and as long as the people support them it is not possible to crush them or tear them apart. But on the day when the members of the seminaries and the students of the seminaries come to lack ethical principles and Islamic manners, and fight each other, and form rival gangs, and are not refined and purified, dirty their hands with unsuitable deeds, then naturally the nation of Islam will get a bad impression of the seminaries and the clergy, and support for them will be lost, and consequently the way will be opened for the use of force and enemy's influence. If you see that governments are afraid of a cleric and of a marja' (authority in Shi'ite jurisprudence and source of emulation), and take account of them, it is because of this, that-they benefit from the support of the people; in truth, they are afraid of the people. They consider it probable that the people will rebel and rise up against them if they show contempt and audacity and violate a cleric. However, if the clerics oppose one another and defame one another and do not behave with Islamic manners and morals, they will fall from their position in the community, and the people will abandon them. [18]

The people expect you to be ruhani (spiritual, a cleric), well-mannered with the manners of Islam, and to be of the party of Allah. Restrain yourselves from the glamour and glitter of life and artificiality, and do not refuse any kind of self-sacrifice in the way of the advancement of Islamic ideals and service to the nation of Islam. Step forward on the way of God the Almighty to please Him, and except for the unique Creator pay attention to no one. However, if, contrary to what is expected, it is seen that instead of paying attention to the transcendental, all you care about is this world, and just like the others you try to gain worldly and personal interests, and you fight with one another for the sake of the world and its base pleasures, and you take Islam and the Quran, may Allah forbid it, as playthings, simply to reach sinister goals and your own dirty, disgraceful and worldly intentions, and you turn your religion into a marketplace, then the people will be turned away and become cynical. So, you will be responsible. If some of those who wear the turban and burden the seminaries, fight and brawl with each other and malign and slander one another because of personal grudges

and the pursuit of worldly interests, and rivalry over some positions, they commit treason against Islam and the Quran and violate the divine trust. God the Almighty has placed the holy religion of Islam in our hands as a trust. The Noble Quran is a great divine trust. The 'ulama and ruhaniyun (clergy) a the bearers of the divine trust, and they bear the responsibility to protect that trust from betrayal. This stubbornness and personal and worldly antagonism are treachery against Islam and the great Prophet of Islam.

I do not know what purpose is served by these oppositions, formations of cliques, and rivalries. If it is for the sake of the world, you do not have much of that! Supposing that you did benefit from pleasures and worldly interests, there would be no place for disagreements, unless you were not ruhani, and the only thing you inherited of ruhaniyat (spirituality, being a cleric) was the robe and the turban. A ruhani (cleric) who is occupied with supra-natural, a ruhani who benefits from living teachings and formative Islamic attributes, a ruhani who considers himself a follower of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Peace be with him, is not possibly tempted by the world, nor would he allow it to cause disagreements. You who have declared yourselves to be followers of the Commander of the Faithful, Peace be with him, you should at least make a bit of research into the life of that great man, and see if you are really one of his followers! Do you know and practise anything of his zuhd (asceticism), taqwa (piety, God-wariness) and simple, unadorned life? Do you know anything of that great man's combat against oppression and injustice, and class differences, and of his unhesitating defence and support of the oppressed and persecuted, of how he lent a hand to the dispossessed and suffering social classes? Have you put it into practice? Is the meaning "Shi'ite" nothing more than the ornamental appearances of Islam? [19] Therefore, what is the difference between you and other Muslims who are much ahead and more observant in these matters than the Shi'ah? What distinguishes you over them?

Those who today have set a part of the world on fire, who spill blood and who kill, do this because they are competing with each other in looting the nations of the world and swallowing their wealth and the products of their labour, and in bringing the weak and under-developed countries under their domination and control. Thus, in the name of freedom, development and prosperity, the defence of independence and protection of borders, and under other deceptive slogans, every day the flames of war are set in some corner of the world, and millions of tons of incendiary bombs are dropped upon defenceless nations. This fighting seems correct and accords with the logic of worldly people whose brains are polluted. However, your conflicts, even according to their logic, are incorrect. If asked why they are fighting, they will say that they want to take over such and such a country; the wealth and income of such and such a country must be made ours. However, if you are asked why you have conflicts and why you are fighting, what will you answer? What benefit do you get from the world, for the sake of which you are fighting? Your monthly income, which the maraji' taqlid (supreme authorities of religious jurisprudence) give to you, called "shahriyah," is less than the money spent by others for cigarettes! I saw in a newspaper or magazine-I don't recall exactly--that the amount the Vatican sends to a single priest in Washington makes quite a large figure. I reckon it is more than the entire budget of all the Shi'ite seminaries! Is it right

for you, with your lifestyle and conditions, to have conflicts and confrontations with one another?

The root of all these conflicts which have no specific sacred aim is love of this world. If conflicts of this sort exist among you, it is for the reason that you have not expelled the love of this world from your hearts. Because worldly interests are limited, each one rises up against his rival in order to obtain them. You desire a certain position which someone else also wants, and naturally this leads to jealousy and strife. However, the people of God-who have expelled the love of the world from their hearts and have no aim but God-never fight with one another and never cause such calamities and corruption. If all of the divine prophets were to gather in a city today, there would be no disagreement or conflict among them, for their aims and goals are one. The hearts of-all of them attend to God the Almighty, and they are clear of any love of the world.

If your deeds and actions, your way of life and your wayfaring, are of the sort evident today, then you had better fear-may God protect us from It-that you may leave this world without being one of the Shi'ah of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Peace be upon him. You should fear that your repentance might not be accepted, and that you might not receive the intercession of Imam 'Ali. Before losing the opportunity, you should try to remedy this. Give up these banal and shameful conflicts. These confrontations and conflicts are wrong. Do you compose two nations? Does your religion constitute different sects? Why will you not beware? Why are you not pure and honest and brotherly with one another? Why? Why?

These conflicts are dangerous, for they lead to irreparable harms, the destruction of the seminaries, and they will bring you discredit and dishonour in the community. This banding into gangs is only to your loss. Not only does it bring you harm and .discredit, but it brings dishonour and harm to the community and the nation, and leads to the harm of Islam. If your confrontations lead to harm it will be an unforgivable offence, and before God the Almighty it will be one of the greatest of all sins, because it will corrupt the community and make it prone to the influence and domination of the enemy.

Perhaps some hidden hands are at work spreading enmity and discord in the seminaries, sowing by various means the seeds of discord and strife, poisoning the thoughts and confusing the minds under the guise of'religious duties' By means of such 'religious duties' corruption is established in the seminaries, so that those who are useful for the future of Islam are destroyed and disabled from serving Islam and the Islamic community in the future.

It is necessary to be conscious and aware. Do not fool yourselves into thinking that your religious duties require such things, and that your religious obligations are such and so. Sometimes Satan determines responsibilities and duties for man. Sometimes selfish wants and desires force a man to do things in the name of religious duties. Offending a Muslim and saying something bad about a brother in faith are not religious duties. This is love of the

world and love of self. These are the promptings of Satan which bring such wretchedness for man. This enmity is the enmity of the damned: "That most surely is the truth, the contending of one with another of the inmates of the fire" (38:64). Enmity and contention exist in hell. The people of hell have conflicts, fighting and clawing at one another. If you have quarrels for the sake of the world, beware that you are preparing hell for yourself, and you are on the way there. There is no fighting for things of the other world. The people of the other world are pure and at peace with one another. Their hearts are overflowing with the love of God and servitude to Him. The love of God requires the love of those who have faith in God. The love for the servants of God is the shadow of that very love for God.

Do not set your own hands on fire. Do not set ablaze the flames of hell. Hell is lit with the ugly works and deeds of man. These are the deeds of refractory man which set this fire. It is narrated: "I passed hell when it was extinguished." [20] If a man does not light the fire by his works and deeds, hell will remain extinguished. The interior of this nature is hell. To approach this nature is to approach hell. When man passes away from this world and the; curtains are drawn aside, he will realize, "This is for what your own hands have sent before," (3:182), and "and what they had done they shall find present," (18:49). All of the deeds which are done by man in this world will be seen in the other world, and will be embodied for him, "So he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it and he who has done an atoms weight of evil shall see it"(99:7-8). All of the works and deeds and words of man will be reflected in the other world. It is as if everything in our lives were being filmed, and in that world the film will be shown, and one will be able to deny none of it. All of our actions and movements will be shown to us, in addition to the testimony given by our limbs and organs: "They shall say: Allah, Who makes everything speak, has made us speak" (41:21). You will not be able to deny your ugly deeds or hide them before God, Who Will make all things able to speak and bear witness. Think a little, look ahead, and weigh the consequences of your deeds. Keep in mind the perilous events which take place after death, the pressure of the grave, the world of barzakh (the period between death and resurrection), and do not neglect the hardships which will follow that. At least believe in hell. If a man believes in the perilous events which take place after death, he will change his way of life. If you had faith and certainty in these things, you would not live so freely and licentiously. You will try to guard your pen, your steps, and your tongue, in order to reform and purify yourselves.

Divine Blessings

Because He favours His servants, God the Blessed and Supreme gave them Intellect. He gave them the power to refine and purify themselves. He sent the prophets and awliya' to guide people and to help them to reform themselves so that they do not fall into the severe chastisement of hell. If these restraints do not bring about awareness and refinement in man, God the Merciful, will make him aware through other means: by various hardships, afflictions, poverty, illness. Like an expert physician or a skilled and kind nurse He tries to

cure sick men from dangerous spiritual illnesses. If a servant is blessed by God, he will be faced with afflictions until he turns his attention to God the Almighty, and is refined. This is the way, and other than this there is no way. But man must tread this path with his own feet in order to attain success. If he does not succeed in this way, and the misled man is not cured, and he does not deserve the blessings of heaven. There will be much pressure on him when his soul is drawn from him, so perchance he will return and be aware. Again, if he is not affected, then in the grave, in the world of barzakh, and in the terrible perilous events which take place after death he will suffer pressures and chastisement until he becomes purified and refined, and he will not go to hell. All of these are blessings from Almighty God to prevent man from going to hell. What then if with all these blessings and favours from Almighty God he is still not cured? Then there is no other alternative but the last cure, which is that he should be burned. How many a man has not refined and reformed himself and was not affected by these cures, so that he needed God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, to refine His servant by fire, just as gold must be purified in fire.

Regarding the ayah "Living therein for ages," (78:23), it has been reported that the 'ages' mentioned here are for those who have been guided and the basis of whose faith has been intact. [21] This is for me and you, if we are believers. Each age lasts for thousands of years, how many God only knows. God forbid that we reach such a state that these cures are not effective, so that this final cure is required for deserving and meriting the everlasting blessings [of heaven] God forbid that it should be necessary that a man should go to hell for a while and burn there until he is purified from his vices, spiritual pollution, and filthy Satanic attributes, so that he may become deserving and capable of benefitting from "gardens beneath which rivers flow." (58:22)

Beware that this is only for those whose sins have not reached such an extent that they are entirely deprived of the mercy and blessings of God the Almighty, those who yet have an essential merit for going to heaven. God forbid that a man, due to the multitude of his sins, should be expelled and blocked from the presence of God the Almighty, and that he should be bereft of the divine mercy, so that there is no other way for him but to remain forever in the fire of hell. God forbid that you should be bereft of divine mercy and blessings, and that you should be subject to His wrath, anger, and chastisements. May your deeds, behaviour and speech not be the means to the denial of grace, so that there is no way for you but eternal damnation.

Now, while you cannot bear to hold a hot stone in your hand for a minute, keep the fire of hell away! Keep these fires from the seminaries and from the clerical community. Keep disputes and strife far from your hearts. Behave well with people, and in company, and be compassionate and kind. Of course, you are not to be nice to sinners with regard to their sins and rebelliousness. Tell him to his face of his ugly deeds and wrongdoing, and prohibit him from it; and keep yourselves from promoting anarchy and disturbance. Behave well with the servants of God and the righteous. Show respect to the learned with regard to their knowledge, to those on the path of guidance with regard to their virtue, and to the ignorant

and unlearned, for they are also the servants of God. Have good behaviour, be kind, honest and brotherly. Refine yourselves. You want to refine and guide the community, but how can one who is not able to reform and manage himself guide and manage others? Now there are only a few days left in the month of Sha'ban, so try in these few days to repent and reform yourselves, and enter the blessed month of Ramadan with a healthy soul.

Points regarding the Intimate Devotions (Munajat) of the Month of Sha'ban

Have you said the Munajat of Sha'ban for God, the Blessed and Supreme, a devotion whose recital has been recommended during this month, from the first until the last of the month? Have you benefited from its lofty meanings which teach increased faith and knowledge (ma'rifah) with regard to the station of the Lord? It is reported with regard to this supplication that it is the munajat of Imam 'Ali-Peace be upon him-and his descendants and all of the immaculate Imams-Peace be upon them-called upon Allah by this devotion. [22] Very few supplications and devotions (du'a wa munajat) may be found which were recited by all of the Imams ('a) for God.

This devotion is truly a preparatory means to admonish and prepare man to receive the responsibilities of the blessed month of Ramadan, and it is possible that it is also to remind the aware person of the motive for fasting and its valuable fruits.

The immaculate Imams, Peace be with them, have explained many things by the tongue of supplication. The tongue of supplication is very different from the other tongues by which those greats explained precepts. They have explained most spiritual, metaphysical, and precise divine matters, and that which is related to knowledge of Allah by the tongue of supplication. But we recite supplications to the end and unfortunately pay no attention to their meanings and fail to understand what they really want to say.

In this munajat we read:

My God, grant that I may be perfectly cut off from all else but Thee, and enlighten the vision of our hearts by the radiance of vision toward Thee, until the visions of the heart tear through the curtains of light and reach the Source of Greatness and our spirits get anchored to the threshold of Thy sanctity. [23]

It is possible that the meaning of the sentence, "O my God! Grant that I may be perfectly cut off from all else but Thee," is that prior to the blessed month of Ramadan, divinely aware people should get ready and prepare themselves for cutting themselves off and avoiding worldly pleasures (and this avoidance is that very being cut off perfectly from all else but Allah). Being perfectly cut off from all else is not something easily obtained. It requires extra hard practice, going to some lengths, spiritual exercises, perseverance, and discipline, until

one is able to fix one's attention completely on nothing but God and cut himself off from all else. If someone is able to do this, he has reached a great felicity. However, with the least attention to this world it is impossible to be cut off from all else but Allah. Someone who wants to perform the fast of the blessed month of Ramadan with such manners as he has been asked to, must cut himself off completely from all else so that he can observe the etiquette for the celebration and feast [of Allah], coming to know of the station of the Host, insofar as this is possible.

According to the order of the Noble Apostle (s) (which is related in one of his sermons) all of the servants of God, the Supreme, have been invited by Him to a feast in the blessed month of Ramadan and are to be the guests of the Provider at His feast. There he says:

O you people! The month of Allah is approaching you ... and you have been invited in it to the feast of Allah. [24]

In these few days until the blessed month of Ramadan, you should reflect, reform yourselves, and pay attention to God the Almighty, seek forgiveness for your unbecoming behaviour and deeds, and if, God forbid, you have committed a sin, repent for it prior to entering the blessed month of Ramadan. Habituate your tongue to munajat to God the Almighty. God forbid that in the blessed month of Ramadan you should backbite or slander, or in short, sin, and so become polluted by transgression in the presence of the Lord, the Exalted, at His feast. You have been invited during this honourable month to the banquet of God the Almighty, "and you have been invited in it to the feast of Allah," so, get yourself ready for the magnificent feast of the Almighty. At least respect the formal and exoteric manners of fasting. (The true manners of fasting are another matter entirely, and require constant care and effort.) The meaning of fasting is not merely refraining from eating and drinking; one must also keep oneself from sin. This is the primary etiquette of fasting for novices. (The etiquette of fasting for divine people who want to reach the Source of Greatness is other than this.) You should at least observe the elementary etiquette of fasting, and in the same way that you refrain from eating and drinking, you should keep your eyes, ears, and tongue from transgression. From now on, keep your tongue from backbiting, slander, speaking bad, and lies, and expel from your hearts all spite, envy, and other ugly Satanic attributes. If you are able, cut yourself off from all but Allah. Perform your deeds sincerely and without ostentation. Cut yourselves off from the Satans among humans and the jinn.

Though apparently we have lost hopes of reaching such a valuable state of felicity, at least try to see to it that your fast is not accompanied by sin. Otherwise, even if your fast is correct from the point of view of Islamic law, it will not ascend to be accepted by God. There is a big difference between the ascension of one's works and their acceptance on the one hand and their religious correctness on the other. If, by the end of the blessed month of Ramadan, there is no change in your works and deeds, and your ways and manners are no different from what they were before the month of fasting, it is evident that the fast which you were expected to

perform was not realized; and that which you have done is no more than a vulgar physical fast. In this noble month, in which you have been invited to the divine banquet, if you do not gain insight (ma'rifah) about God the Almighty nor insight into yourself, it means that you have not properly participated in the feast of Allah and failed to observe the etiquette of the feast. You must not forget that if you are not able to reform and refine yourselves in this blessed month, which is the 'month of Allah,' in which the gates of divine mercy are opened to the servants of God and the satans and devils-according to some reports-are locked in chains, [25] and if you fail to manage and control your nafs e ammarah (the 'commanding self'), [26] to subdue your selfish lusts and to cut off your relations and interests with this world and material things, then after the end of the month of fasting it will be difficult for you to be able to accomplish this.

Therefore, take advantage of this opportunity before the magnificent grace of it vanishes, and purify and reform yourselves. Get ready and prepare to perform the duties of the month of fasting. Let it not be that prior to the arrival of the month of Ramadan you are like one who is wound up by the hand of Satan so that in this single month when the satans are enchained you automatically busy yourselves with sin and deeds opposed to the orders of Islam! Sometimes the rebellious and sinful man, due to his distance from God and the great number of his sins, sinks so low into darkness and ignorance that he does not need Satan to tempt him, but he himself takes on the colour of Satan. [27] Someone who pursues selfish desires and is obedient to Satan, gradually turns the colour of Satan. You should decide to control yourselves at least in this one month, and avoid speech and behaviour which displease God, the Supreme. Right now in this very session make a covenant with God that during the blessed month of Ramadan you will avoid backbiting, slander and speaking ill of others. Bring your tongue, eyes, hands, ears and other organs and limbs under your control. Be watchful of your deeds and your words. It is possible that this same worthy deed will result in God's paying attention to you and blessing you. After the month of fasting, when the satans are released from their chains, you will have been reformed, and you will no longer listen to the lies of Satan, and you will refine yourselves. I repeat, decide during these thirty days of the blessed month of Ramadan to control your tongue, eyes, ears and all your organs and limbs, and pay constant attention to the judgement of the Shari'ah about the works you intend to do, and the words you intend to speak and the matter you intend to listen to.

This is the elementary and outward manner of keeping a fast. At least keep to this outward manner of fasting! If you observe that someone is about to backbite, prevent him and say to him that we have made a covenant to keep ourselves from prohibited matters during these thirty days of Ramadan. And if you are not able to keep him from backbiting, leave that session. Do not just sit there and listen. The Muslims must be safe from you. Someone from whose hands, tongue and eyes other Muslims are not safe is not truly a Muslim, [28] although he may be outwardly and formally a Muslim who has formally proclaimed: "La illaha illa Allah" (There is no god but Allah). If, God forbid, you want to offend somebody, to slander him or backbite, you should know that you are in the presence of the Lord; you are the guest of God Almighty, and in the presence of God, the Supreme, you would behave rudely to

one of His servants; and to insult one of the servants of God is to insult God. They are the servants of God; especially if they are scholars on the path of knowledge and piety (taqwa). Sometimes you see that because of such affairs man reaches such a state that he denies God at the moment of his death! He denies the divine signs:

Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them. (30:10)

These things occur gradually. Today, an incorrect view; tomorrow, a word of backbiting; and the next day, slander against a Muslim, and . . . little by little these sins accumulate in the heart, and make the heart black and prevent man from attaining knowledge (ma'rifah) of Allah, until it reaches the point that he denies everything and rejects the truth.

According to some ayat of the Quran as interpreted in some traditions, the deeds of men are presented to the Prophet (s) and the pure Imam's ('a) and are reviewed by them. [29] When the Prophet reviews your deeds and he sees how many errors and sins there are, how upset and distressed will he be? Do not make the Apostle of God become upset and distressed. You would not want to break his heart and make him sad? When he witnesses that the page of your deeds is replete with backbiting, slander, and speaking ill of other Muslims and that all your attention was devoted to this worldly and materialistic affairs and that your heart was overflowing with malice, hatred, spite and suspicion towards each other, it is possible that in the presence of God, the Supreme and Holy, and the angels of Allah, he will be embarrassed that his community and followers were ungrateful for their divine blessings, and they betrayed the trust of God, the Holy and Supreme, in such an unbridled and heedless manner.

When someone who is related to us, even if in a menial position, errs, we become embarrassed. You are related to the Apostle of Allah, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his Progeny; by entering the seminary, you have related yourself to the Law of Islam, the most Noble Apostle and the Noble Quran. If you perform ugly deeds, it upsets the Prophet and he cannot bear it, and God forbid, you may be damned. Do not let the Apostle of Allah (s) and the pure Imams become upset and saddened.

The heart of man is like a mirror, clear and bright, and it becomes dark because of too much attention to this world and too many sins. However, if a person at least performs the fast for God the Almighty sincerely and without duplicity (I am not saying that other acts of worship are not to be pure; it is necessary for all of the acts of worship to be performed sincerely and without duplicity), then this worship-which is a turning away from lust, a putting aside of pleasure and cutting oneself off from all but God-if it is performed well in this single month, perhaps the grace of God will be extended to him and the mirror of his heart will be cleaned of its blackness and tarnish, and there is hope that he will change his ways and become dissuaded from this wilderness and worldly pleasures. When the Night of Qadr [30] arrives, one will gain the illumination which is obtained on that night by the friends of God and the

believers.

The reward of such a fast is God, as it has been reported:

"The fast is for Me and I grant its reward." [31] Nothing else could be the reward of such a fast. The Gardens of Blessings would not count as a worthy reward for such a fast.

If a man takes fasting to mean closing his mouth to food but opening it for backbiting, and he engages in backbiting until sahar[32] in the warm and friendly company in the nights when there is opportunity and time, such fasting will be of no benefit and have no effect. Rather, one who fasts in this way has not observed the etiquette of the banquet of God. He has violated the rights of his Benefactor, the Benefactor Who has provided him with all the means and conveniences of life before creating him, and has provided for the means of his development. He sent the prophets to guide him. He sent down the heavenly books. Man has been given the power to approach the source of greatness and the light of felicity, has been favoured with intellect and perception, and has been the recipient of His generosity. Now, He has invited His servants to enter His guest house and to sit at the table of His blessings where they are to thank and praise Him to the extent that their tongues and hands are able. Is it right for the servants who partake at the table of His blessings and use the means and conveniences which He has freely provided for them that they should oppose their Master and Host and rebel against Him? Is it right that they should use these things in opposition to Him and against His wishes? Wouldn't this be biting the hand that feeds one, the height of ingratitude to sit at the table of one's Master and audaciously insult one's honoured Host, Who is his benefactor, with rude and impudent behaviour and performing ugly and evil deeds before the Host?

The guests must at least know who their Host is, and become aware of His dignity. They should be acquainted with the etiquette and manners of the sessions and try not to perform any deed contrary to virtue and decorum. The guests of the Supreme Lord must know the divine station of the Lord of Majesty, a station of which the Imams, Peace be upon them, and the great divine prophets were constantly seeking greater knowledge and more perfect awareness, aspiring to reach the Source of light and greatness. "And enlighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of Thy vision, until the vision of the hearts tears through the curtains of light and reaches the Source of Greatness." The banquet of Allah is that very "source of greatness." God, the Blessed and Exalted, has invited His servants to enter the source of light and greatness. However, if the servant is not worthy, he will not be able to enter into such a splendid and sumptuous position. God, the Exalted, has invited his servants to all sorts of favours and boons and to numerous spiritual delights, but if they are not prepared to be present at such lofty positions, they will not be able to enter. How can one enter the presence of the Lord and the guest house of the Lord of lords which is the source of greatness with spiritual pollution, vice, and sins of the body and soul? It requires merit. Preparation is necessary. In indignity and with polluted hearts covered by veils of darkness, one will not be

able to understand these spiritual meanings and truths. One must tear these veils and push aside these dark and luminous curtains which cover the heart and are barriers to union with Allah so that one will be able to enter the brilliant and splendid divine company.

The Veils Of Islam

Attention to other than God covers man with veils of darkness and light. If any worldly affair is a cause for man's attention to be directed toward the world and to neglect God, the Exalted, it raises dark veils. All of the corporeal worlds are dark veils. If the world is a means of directing attention to the Truth and for arriving at the abode of the Hereafter, which is the "abode of honour," then the dark veils are transformed into veils of light. "Being perfectly cut off from all else" means tearing and pushing aside all the dark and bright veils, until one is able to enter the divine guest house which is the "source of greatness." Hence, in this intimate devotion (munajat) there is a request to God, the Exalted, for vision and brightness of the heart so one may tear the veils of light and reach the source of greatness: "Until the vision of the heart tears through the veils of light and reaches the source of greatness."

However, one who has not yet torn the veils of darkness, one who directs all of his attention to the natural world and, God forbid, becomes deviated from Allah, and one who is basically unaware of the world beyond and the spiritual worlds, and has retrogressed to a state of nature, who has never decided to refine himself, to set into motion his spiritual powers, to push aside the curtains of darkness which are a cloud over his heart, he is lodged in 'the deepest of the depths' which is the ultimate veil:

[Indeed We created man in the fairest structure], then We consigned him to the lowest of the low, (95:4-5)

while the God of the worlds has created man in the most lofty state and station:

Indeed We created man in the fairest structure.

If one follows the desires of the self and from the day he becomes acquainted with himself pays no attention to anything other than the dark wilderness of nature [33] and who never thinks that it is possible that there exists another place and station aside from this polluted dark world, then he will have sunk into the veil of darkness and have become an instance of: "but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire" (7:176). With such a heart polluted by sin that has been covered by the curtain of darkness and with such a gloomy spirit that due to the effect of numerous sins has receded far from God, the Exalted, after that worship of desire and seeking after the world have blinded the intellect and the vision of truth, he cannot be released from the veils of darkness, let alone to tear the veils of light and detach himself from all but Allah. However convinced he might be that one should not deny the station of the saints (awliya') of God, and not consider as myths the worlds of the barzakh, the sirat, the

resurrection, the accounting, the book, heaven and hell, yet due to the effects of sins and the attachment of the heart to the world, one comes to gradually deny these truths, to deny the stations of the awliya' of God, stations which are mentioned in not more than a few lines of prayers and intimate devotions.

Knowledge and Faith

Sometimes you see that one has knowledge of these realities but has no faith. Undertakers are not afraid of the dead, for they have certainty that the corpse cannot harm one. Even when the dead person was alive and had a spirit in his body he could hardly do anything, so of what harm can he be now as an empty frame? However, those who are afraid of the dead are afraid because they do not have faith in this truth. They merely have knowledge.

They know about God and the Day of Retribution, but they lack certainty. The heart is unaware of that which the intellect has understood. They know the proofs for the existence of God and the reality of the Resurrection, but these very same intellectual proofs may be veils covering the heart which do not permit the light of faith to shine in, until God, the Exalted, frees them from the darknesses and obscurities and leads them to enter the worlds of light and radiances:

Allah is the Guardian (Wali) of those who believe; He brings them out of the darknesses into the light. (2:257)

He whose Guardian (Wali) is God, the Blessed and Exalted, and who is taken by Him out from the darknesses never commits another sin, never backbites, never slanders others, and he is never vengeful or envious of his brothers in faith. His own heart is filled with a feeling of luminosity and he no longer holds the world or what it contains in high esteem. As Imam 'Ali ('a) said: "If all the world and what it contains were offered to me to cruelly and unjustly take the skin of a grain of barley from the mouth of an ant, I would never accept it." [34] But some of you trample over everything, and you backbite the great [scholars] of Islam. If others speak ill of the grocers and perfume sellers on the street and backbite them, some of you relate unfair things, insult and are impudent toward the scholars of Islam, because you are not firmly grounded in faith and you do not believe in [divine] retribution for your own deeds.

Infallibility ('ismah) is nothing but perfect faith. The meaning of the infallibility of the prophets and the Friends of God (awliya') is not that, for instance, Gabriel took them by the hand. (Of course, if Gabriel had taken the hand of Shimr [35] he would never have committed a sin.) Rather, infallibility is the offspring of faith. If a man had faith in God, the Exalted, and if he saw God Almighty with the eyes of his heart as one sees the sun, it would not be possible for him to commit a sin, just as if one were standing before an armed power, one would find some 'infallibility'. This fear comes from belief in the [divine] presence, which keeps man from committing sin. The Impeccables (ma'sumun), Peace be upon them, after

their creation from pure nature (tinah) because of the effects of their spiritual discipline, and acquisition of radiance and virtuous character traits, always see themselves as being in the presence of God, Who knows all things and encompasses all affairs. They have faith in the meaning of the words, "La illaha illa Allah" (There is no god but Allah), and they believe that other than God, all persons and all things, are perishing and have no role in determining man's destiny:

All things are perishing but His Face. (28:88)

If man is certain and has faith that all the outward and inward worlds are in the presence of the Lord, and that God, the Exalted, is present everywhere and sees everything, in the presence of God and God's blessings there would be no possibility for committing sins. Man is not able to commit sins before a discerning child and does not expose his private parts, so how could he expose his nakedness before God, the Exalted, and not dread to commit a crime? This is because he has faith in the presence of the child; however, with regard to the divine presence, if he has knowledge, he still lacks faith. Due to the multiplicity of his sins which have darkened and blackened his heart, he is totally unable to accept such truths, and may not even consider them to be likely. Actually, man would not recklessly run wild if he considered it at all likely (he need not have certainty) that that which is reported in the Noble Quran is true, the promises and the threats, and that he should amend his ways and deeds.

If you consider it at all likely that ferocious beasts which might harm you are to be found along the path, or that there are armed bandits who might hold you up, you would refrain from taking that path, and you would try to ascertain the correctness or incorrectness of these reports. Is it possible for someone to consider it possible that hell exists and that one may remain for ever in its fire while at the same time doing wrong? Can it be said that one who considers God the Almighty to be present and watching and who sees himself to be in the presence of the Lord, and who considers it possible that there might be retribution for his words and deeds, a reckoning and chastisement, and that in this world every word he speaks, every step he takes, every deed he does, is recorded by angels of Allah called Raqib and 'Atid [36] and they carefully record all his words and deeds, and in such a state, could he be fearless of his own wrongdoing? It is painful [to realize] that they do not even consider these truths to be possible. From the manners of some and their way of living it is obvious that they do not even consider the existence of a supernatural world to be likely, since the mere consideration of this likelihood keeps man from committing many wrongs.

The First Step in Refinement

How long do you wish to remain in the sleep of negligence, plunged in corruption? Fear God! Beware of the aftermath of your deeds! Wake up from the sleep of negligence! You have not yet awakened. You have not yet taken the first step. The first step of wayfaring is yaqzah (awakening), but you are still asleep. Your eyes may be open, but your hearts are asleep. If

your hearts were not so sleepy and rusted and blackened with the effects of sin, you would not continue your wrongful deeds and words so carelessly and indifferently. If you thought a bit about the affairs of the other world and its terrible path you would give more importance to the heavy duties and responsibilities which rest upon your shoulders.

There is also another world for you, there is also the resurrection. (You are not like other existents for which there is no returning.) Why do you not take warning? Why are you not awake and conscious? Why do you so heedlessly engage in backbiting and speaking ill of your Muslim brothers, or listening to such things? Do you not know that the tongue which wags in backbiting will be trampled under the feet of others on the day of the resurrection? Have you heard that backbiting will be food for the dogs of hell? [37] Have you ever given a thought to how evil are the consequences of these differences, enmities, jealousies, cynicism and selfishness, and arrogance and conceit? Do you know that the repercussion of these wicked forbidden deeds is hell and that it is possible, God forbid, that they will lead to the everlasting fire?

God does not want man to be afflicted with maladies unaccompanied by I pain, for when an illness is accompanied by pain, it forces man to seek a cure, to consult a doctor or go to a hospital, but an unfelt illness without pain is more dangerous. By the time one becomes aware of it, it is too late. If mental illnesses were accompanied by pain, this would be something for which to be thankful. Ultimately, man would be forced to find a cure or a remedy. But what can be done about such dangerous diseases for which there is no pain? The maladies of arrogance and selfishness are without pain. Other sins corrupt the heart and the spirit without causing any pain. Not only are these maladies unaccompanied by pain, but they also bring apparent pleasure. Meetings and sessions of backbiting are very warm and sweet! Love of the self and love of the world, which are the roots of all sins, are pleasurable. [38] One who is afflicted with dropsy may die from water, but yet he enjoys drinking it until his last breath. [39] Naturally, if one gets pleasure from an illness, and it also has no pain, he will not seek any cure for it. However much he is warned that it is fatal, he will not believe it.

If someone is afflicted with the maladies of hedonism and worshipping the world, and his heart is filled with love of the world, he will grow weary of all else but the world and what is in it. Allah forbid, he will become an enemy of God, the servants of God, the divine prophets and awliya and the angels of Allah. He will have a sense of hatred and loathing for them, and when the angels come at the command of the Glorious God to take his soul, he will have a feeling of repulsion and abhorrence, for he will see that God and His angels want to separate him from his beloved (the world and worldly things). It is possible that he will leave the world with hostility and enmity toward the Presence of the Exalted Truth (God). One of the great men of Qazwin, may Allah have mercy on him, reported that he was present at the bedside of someone at the moment of his death. During the last moments of his life, he opened his eyes and said: "No one has ever wronged me the way God has done.! Now, He wants to separate me from these children whom I have taken such pains to raise. Is there ally

greater injustice than this?" If one has not refined oneself, turning away from the world, and has not expelled love of the world from his heart, there is the fear that he will die with a heart overflowing with anger and aversion toward God and His awliya'. He will have to contend with an ominous destiny. Is such an unbridled man to be considered as the crown of creation or as the vilest of creatures?

By Time! Surely man is in loss, except for those who believe and do good works and enjoin upon each other truth. and enjoin upon each other patience. (Sura 103, al Asr)

In this surah, the only exceptions are the believers who perform good works. And a good work is a work which is congruous with the spirit. However, you see that many of man's works are only congruent with the body. "Enjoining" is also not practised. If you are dominated by love of the world and love of the self, and if this prevents you from perceiving truths and realities, and prevents you from performing deeds purely for God, and if you are kept from enjoining the truth and enjoining patience, and you are thereby obstructed from the way to guidance, then you will he in loss. You will be in loss in this world and in the next, for you will have given up your youth and will be prohibited from the blessings of heaven and otherworldly advantages, and also lack this world. If others have no way to heaven, and if the doors to divine mercy are closed to them, if they are to abide eternally in the fire of hell, at least they will have had the world, they will have enjoyed worldly advantages, but you.

Beware, lest love of the world and love of the self gradually increase within you to the point that Satan is able to take away your faith. It is said that all of the efforts of Satan are for the sake of robbing faith. [40] All of his efforts and labours, night and day, are for the sake of taking away the faith of men. No one has given you a document to guarantee you a permanent faith. Perhaps one's faith is merely on loan (mustawda') [41] and in the end Satan will get it, and you will leave this world with enmity for the Blessed and Exalted God and His awliya'.

Perhaps one will have enjoyed an entire life of divine blessings, provided for by Imam Zaman ('a) [42] and, God forbid, in the end one may give up his life without faith and in enmity toward the Bestower of the Blessings. If you have any interest in, relation with, and affection for the world, try to cut it. This world, with all its superficial glamour and glitter is too insignificant to be worthy of love, especially for one who has divested himself of such superficialities of life. What do you have of this world that your heart should be attached to it? You have nought but the mosque, the prayer niche, the seminary, the corner of a room. Is it proper for you to compete for the mosque and the prayer niche? Should this be a cause of disagreement among you, to corrupt the society? Suppose that, like the worldly people, you had a comfortable sumptuous life, and that, God forbid, you spent your life on feasting and drinking. After your life is over, you would see that your life had passed like a pleasant dream, but the requital and liability for it will be with you always. What value does this fleeting and apparently sweet life have (assuming that it is very sweet) in comparison to endless chastisement? The chastisement of worldly people is sometimes endless. The worldly

people who imagine that they have acquired the world and benefit from its advantages and boons are remiss and mistaken. Everyone sees the world from the window of his own environment and situation, and imagines that the world is exactly that which he has. The physical world is broader than that which man imagines he has acquired, discovered and through which he roams. It has been narrated about this world with all its means and ways that: "He has never looked graciously upon it." [43] So, how must the other world be upon which God, the Blessed and Exalted, has looked graciously? What is the 'source of greatness' to which man is called and what is it like? Man is too low to comprehend the source of greatness.

If you purify your intentions, rectify your deeds, expel love of self and position from your hearts, a high station will be prepared for you. The whole world and what exists in it along with its superficial aspects is not worth even a cent in comparison to the station prepared for the righteous servants of God. Try to achieve this lofty station. If you are able, try to make something of yourselves and improve yourselves so that you may pay no heed even to this lofty station. Do not worship God in order to reach this station, but rather call upon Him and prostrate yourselves with your heads upon the earth before Him because He is worthy of worship and magnification. [44] In that case you will have torn through the curtains of light and reached the source of greatness. Can you obtain such a position with these deeds and actions which you perform? Can it be reached by the path you tread? Is there any likelihood of your being saved from divine chastisement and escaping the terrible torment and fire of hell?

Do you imagine that the lamentations of the Pure Imams and the cries of Imam Sajjad ('a) were merely for education's sake, and that they wanted to instruct others about how to cry? With all that spirituality and the lofty position they hold, they wept for fear of God! They understood how difficult and dangerous it is to advance along the way before them. They were aware of the difficulties, hardships and problems of crossing the Sirat, which has this world at one end and the next world at the other and which passes through hell. They were aware of the worlds of the grave, of the barzakh, and of the resurrection, and of their terrible torments, and hence they were never complacent and always took refuge in God from the intense chastisements of the other world.

What thought have you given to these terrible devastating torments, and what way have you found to deliverance from them? When are you going to decide to reform and refine yourselves? Now, while you are young and have the strength of youth and the power over your faculties, and physical weakness has not yet overtaken you, if you do not think of refinement and of making something of yourselves, then how will you be able to do it when you become old, when your bodies and souls are in the grip of weakness and feebleness, and you have lost your will power, your decisiveness and your resistance, and when the burden of your sins has blackened your hearts? With every breath and every step you take, and with each passing moment of your life, reform becomes more difficult, and it is possible for darkness and corruption to increase. The more one's age advances, the more the things which

conflict with human felicity multiply and the more one's powers are weakened. Thus, when old age arrives, it is difficult to be successful at refinement and the acquisition of the virtues and piety (taqwa'). One is unable to repent, for repentance is not merely the verbal expression, "I repent before Allah," rather, contrition and the resolve to abandon one's sin are also necessary. [45] Such contrition and resolve are not to be obtained by one who has engaged in backbiting and lying for fifty or seventy years, whose beard has become white with sin and transgression. Such a person is afflicted with sin to the end of his life.

Youths should not sit still until the dust of age turns them grey. (I have reached old age and am aware of its misfortunes and difficulties.) While you are young, you are able to accomplish something. While you enjoy the strength and determination of youth you can expel selfish desires, worldly attractions and animal desires from yourselves. However, if you do not think about reform and making something of yourselves while you are young, it will be too late when you become old. Think, while you are young, before you become old and exhausted. A young heart is subtle and celestial, and within it the motivation for corruption is weak. However, the older one gets the stronger and firmer is the source of sin implanted in the heart, until it can no longer be uprooted, as it is reported: "The heart of man is clear and shining like a mirror; with each sin a man commits, another black mark is added to the heart, until it becomes black, so that it is possible that a night and day cannot pass without the commission of a sin against the Lord. [46] When old age arrives, it is difficult to restore one's heart to its original form and state.

If, God forbid, you have not reformed yourself when you leave the world, in what manner do you expect to meet God, when your heart is black and your eyes, ears and tongue are polluted by sin? How can you restore that with which you have been entrusted by God when it has become polluted and wicked, while it was given to you in perfect purity and cleanliness? These eyes and ears which are under your control, this hand and tongue which are at your command, these organs and limbs with which you live, all have been entrusted to you by God, the Almighty, and were given to you in perfect purity and righteousness. If they are afflicted with sin, they become polluted. If, God forbid, they are polluted with that which is forbidden, wickedness results. When the time comes to return this trust, it is possible that you will be asked if this is the right way to protect the trust which was given you. When the trust was placed under your control, was it like this? Was the heart which you were given, like this? Were the eyes which were bestowed upon you, like this? Were the other organs and limbs which were placed at your will this polluted and dirty? What will be your answer to these questions? How will you meet God when you have committed such treachery with regard to that with which you have been entrusted?

You are young. You have spent your youth in such a way that from a worldly perspective you have given up many benefits. If you use this valuable time and the spring of your youth in the way of God and with a specific sacred purpose, then it has not been wasted, but rather this world and the next have been secured for you. However, if your behaviour is of such a

manner as is currently witnessed, then you have wasted your youth and the prime of your life has been passed in vain. In the other world, before God, you will be questioned and reproached, while the penalty for your perfidious deeds and acts will not only be limited to the other world. In this world also, various severe difficulties, calamities and troubles will grab you by the neck, and you will fall into the whirlpool of misfortune and disaster.

Another Warning

Your future is dark: numerous enemies are surrounding you on every side and from all strata; dangerous fiendish plans are ready to be enacted which will destroy you and the seminaries. The colonialists dream about what they will do with you, they have deep dreams about what they will do with Islam and the Muslims. With the pretence of Islam, they have drawn up dangerous plans for you. Only in the shade of refinement, preparation, and the proper arrangement and order will you be able to push away these corruptions and difficulties, and frustrate the plans of the colonialists.

I am now living the last days of my life. Sooner or later I will leave you. But I see before me dark black days ahead for you. If you do not reform and prepare your-selves, and if you do not manage your studies and your lives with order and discipline, then, God forbid, you will be doomed to annihilation.

Before you lose the chance, before you fall into the hands of the enemy with regard to every religious and scholarly affair, think! Wake up! Arise! The first stage is to decide to refine and purify your souls and to reform yourselves. Prepare and organize yourselves. Establish some order and discipline in the seminaries. Do not let others come to arrange [the affairs of] the seminaries. Do not let others take hold of the seminaries with the excuse that 'these people are not capable of it; it is not their sort of work; they are just a group of loafers who have gathered in the seminaries,' and then in the name of organization and reform, to spoil the seminaries and take you under their own control. Do not give them an excuse. If you are organized, purified, and well ordered and arranged in every respect, others will not be able to aspire to control you. There will then be no way to penetrate into the seminaries and the clerical society. Prepare and purify yourselves. Get ready to prevent the mischief with which you will be faced. Prepare your seminaries for resistance against the events which are to come

God forbid, black days lie ahead of you. The conditions are ripe for bad days to come. The colonialists want to destroy all aspects of Islam, and you must stand up against them.

With love of self and position, with arrogance and pride, you cannot mount any resistance. An evil scholar, a scholar who inclines toward the world, a scholar who thinks of preserving his position and administrative post, will not be able to combat the enemies of Islam. He will be more harmful than others. Take a step for the sake of God. Dispel the love of the world from

your hearts. Then you will be able to engage in combat. From this moment on, develop and raise this point in your hearts, that I must be an armed soldier of Islam, and sacrifice myself for Islam. I must work for Islam until I am destroyed. Do not make excuses for yourself that today is inappropriate. Try to be useful for the future of Islam. In short, become a human being!

The colonialists are afraid of human beings. They are afraid of man. The colonialists, who want to plunder all we have, will not allow the training of human beings in religious and scholarly universities. They are afraid of man. If a man is found in a country, it bothers them, and endangers their interests. It is your duty to make something of yourselves, to become perfect men, and to stand up against the vicious plans of the enemies of Islam. If you are not organized and prepared, if you do not resist and combat the lashes which whip the body of Islam every day, not only will you yourselves be destroyed, but also the precepts and laws of Islam will be annihilated and you will be responsible! You 'ulama'! You scholars! You Muslims! You will be responsible First you 'ulama' and seminary students and then the rest of the Muslims will be responsible: "All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for tending the flock." [47] You young people must strengthen your wills so that you can stand up against every oppression and injustice. Other than this there is no alternative: your dignity, the dignity of Islam, and the dignity of the Islamic countries depend upon your resistance and opposition.

God Almighty! Protect Islam, the Muslims and the Islamic countries from foreign evils. Cut the hands of the colonialists and traitors to Islam in the Islamic countries and in the seminaries. Grant success and help to the Islamic 'ulama' and to the great maraji[48] in their defence of the sacred laws of tile Noble Quran and their advancement of the holy ideals of Islam. Make the clergy of Islam aware of their weighty duties and important responsibilities in the present epoch. Protect and keep safe the seminaries and clerical centres from the thievery and influence of the enemies of Islam and the hands of the colonialists. Grant the success of making something of themselves and purifying and refining the soul to the young generation of clerics and university students and to the entire Muslim community. Free the people of Islam from the sleep of negligence, from frailty, from apathy and inflexibility of thought, so that with the lustrous revolutionary teachings of the Qura'n they may come to themselves, rise up, and in the shade of unity and oneness they may cut the hands of the colonialists and the inveterate enemies of Islam from the Islamic countries, and so that they may regain the freedom, independence, nobility and greatness which they have lost.

Our Lord, pour down upon us patience and make our steps firm and assist us against the unbelieving people. (2:250)

Notes:

[1]. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali, Peace be upon him, said: "When the

Messenger of Allah, may Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him and his Household, sent me to Yemen, he said: 'O 'Ali! Do not war against anyone until you invite him to Islam. I swear by Allah, if by your hand the Great and Almighty Allah should guide a man, then it is better for you than all that the sun rises upon or sets upon, and you are his wali (guardian).' " Al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 36, "kitab al-jihad," "bab al-du'a ila al-islam qabl al-qital," hadith 2.

[2]. Usul al Kafi, kitab fadhl al-'ilm," Chapters: "bab sifat al-'ulama'," "bab badhl al-'ilm," "bab al-nahy 'an al-qawl bi ghayr 'ilm," "bab isti'mal al-'ilm," "bab al-musta'kil bi 'ilmihi wa al-mubahi bihi," "bab luzum al-hujjah 'ala al-'alim," "bab al-nawadir," and Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 18, pp 9-17, 98-129, "kitab al-qada'," "abwab sifat al-qadi," bab 4,11,12.

[3]. Jamil ibn Darraj says that he heard from Imam Sadiq, Peace be upon him, that he said, "When the soul reaches here (and with his hand he pointed to his neck) for the learned, there remains no further chance of repentance." Then he recited this ayah "The repentance of Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance" (4:17). Usul al Kafi, vol. 1, p. 59,"kitab faqi al-'ilm," "bab luzum al-hujjah tala al-'alim," hadith 3.

[4]. Hafs ibn Ghiyath said that Imam Sadiq, Peace be upon him, said: "O Hafs! Seventy sins will be forgiven of an ignorant person before one sin is forgiven of an 'alim." Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 59, "kitab fadl alu ilm" bab luzum al-hujjah 'ala al-'alim."

[5]. The Prophet of Allah, may Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him and with his Household, said, "There are two groups from my community such that if they are righteous then the community will be righteous, and if they are corrupt, then the community will become corrupt." It was asked, "Who are they?" He replied, "The 'ulama' and the rulers." Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, al-Khisal, Chapter 2, p. 37; al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-'uqul, p. 50.

[6]. Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali said that he heard from the Commander of the Faithful, Peace be with him, that he reported from the Prophet, that he said, "There are two kinds of 'ulama', one who acts in accordance with his knowledge, so he has been saved, and the 'alim who does not act in accordance with his knowledge, so he will perish. And truly the people of hell will suffer from the stench of the 'alim who does not act in accordance with his knowledge." Usul al Kafi, vol. 1, p. 55, "kitab fadl al-'ilm", "bab isti'mal al-'ilm," hadith 1.

[7]. Imam Sadiq, Peace be upon him, said, "Invite the people to excellence, but not by your tongue, rather let people see in you right struggle (ijtihad), truthfulness, and piety." Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 78.

[8]. None given.

[9]. This group includes Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (founder of the Wahhabi sect), Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i and Sayyid Kazim Rashti (founders of the Shaykhi sect), Ahmad Kasravi and Ghulam Ahmad (founder of the Qadiyani sect).

[10]. Grand Ayatullah Hajj Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim Ha'iri Yazdi (d. 1355/1937) was one of the greatest of Islamic jurists and a juristic authority of the Shi'ah in the fourteenth Islamic century. He attended the classes of such masters as Mirza-ye Bozorg Shirazi, Mirza Muhammad Taqi Shirazi, Akhiund Khorasani, Sayyid Kazim Yazdi, Sayyid Muhammad Isfahani Fesharaki, in Najaf and Samarra'. In the year 1340/1921, at the insistence of the ulama of Qum and after finding a good omen in a passage from the Quran he took up residence in Qum and organized the centre of religious studies (hawzah 'ilmiyyah) at Qum. Among his works are: Durar al-Fawa'id in usul, al-Salat, al-Nikah, al-Rida', al-Mawarith, all the four in the field of Islamic law.

[11]. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (100%-460/995-1067). He is known as 'al-Shaykh al-Ta'ifah,' and he was one of the most distinguished scholars of the Imami Shi'ah. He was the leading jurist and theologian of his time, and was also strong in literature, rijal, exegesis, and hadith. His teachers were al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Sayyid al-Murtada, Ibn al-Ghadai'iri, and Ibn 'Abdun. The Shaykh is the author of two famous books of Shi'ite hadith, Istibsar and Tahdhib, counted among the four books" of the Imami Shi'i hadith corpus. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi established Najaf as the centre of Shi'ite learning.

[12]. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi began to write the Tahdhib, which is a commentary on the Muqni'ah of al-Shaykh al-Mufid, during the lifetime of his teacher (d. 413/1022). Al-Shaykh al-Tusi was about twenty-six years old at this time.,

[13]. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Musa, known as al-Sayyid al-Murtada, and 'Alam al-Huda, (355-436/965-1044), is one of the greatest scholars of Islam and Shi'ism. Most of the great scholars of the Imami Shi'ah, including al-Shaykh al-Tusi, have benefitted from his teaching. Among the works he wrote are: al-Amali, al-Dhari'ah ila usul al-Shari'ah, al-Nasiriyyat, al- Intisar, al-Shafi'i.

[14]. Fayd Kashani, al-Kalamat al-maknunah, p. 123.

[15]. Shaykh Murtada Ansari (1214-1281/1799-1864), known as "Khatam al-Fuqaha' wa al-Mujtahidin," was a descendant of Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, a Companion of the Prophet, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his Household. He was a genius in Jurisprudence ('ilm al-usul), and he brought great developments in this field. Some of his professors were: Shaykh Musa Kashif al-Ghita', Shaykh 'Ali Kashif ai-Ghita', Mulla Ahmad Naraqi and Sayyid Muhammad Mujahid. Shaykh Ansari trained some great jurists, including: Akhund Khorasani, Mirza Shirazi and Mirza Muhammad Hasan Ashtiyani. His works include: Fara'id al-usul (known as Rasa'il) and Makasib one of the most famous text books.

[16]. Sayyid 'Ali ibn Sayyid Muhammad (d. 1283/1866), was one of the great ascetics and mystics of his day. He received authorization (as a mujtahid) from Shaykh Ansari and Sayyid Husayn, the Friday Prayer leader of Shushtar. Sayyid 'Ali spent some time in Shushtar as a judge and legal authority (mufti), and then moved to Najaf al-Ashraf. There he attended the classes of Shaykh Ansari in fiqh, and Shaykh Ansari also attended his classes in ethics. When Shaykh Ansari passed away, Sayyid 'Ali was the executor of his will and he succeeded him in his professorial position. The late Shaykh Sayyid 'Ali was the teacher and counselor of Akhund Mulla Husaynquli Hamadani, who had many students who were led by him, some of the

greatest of whom were: Mirza Jawad Maliki Tabrizi, Sayyid Ahmad Karbala'i, Shaykh Muhammad Bihari, Sayyid 'Ali Qadi Tabrizi and 'Allamah Tabataba'i.

[17]. Majma' al-bayan, under the exegesis of the fourth ayah of the Surah, The Pen (al-Qalam).

[18]. 'Ali, Peace be with him, said: "If the bearers of 'ilm (knowledge, science) bear it as it deserves to be borne, they will be loved by Allah, the angels, and those who are obedient to Him, and those who bear it for the sake of this world will be despised by Allah and held in contempt by the people."Tuhaf al-uqul, p. 201, Chapter on the words of the Commander of Ihe Faithful, Peace be upon him.

[19]. Sifat al-Shi'ah, by al-Shaykh al-Saduq, and also Bihar al-al-anwar, vol. 65, pp. 83-95 and 149-196, "kitab al-iman wa al-kufr" ('The Book of Faith and Infidelity"), the section on, "Verily the Shi'ah are the people of the Religion of Allah ...." the section on "the Attributes of the Shi'ah and their kinds ...." Sharh-e Chehel hadith, Imam Khumayni (may he rest in Peace), hadith 29, translated by A. Q. Qara'i as "Forty Hadith: An Exposition," in the journal al-Tawhid, vol. X. (Tr.)

[20]. This refers to a hadith according to which: "When some people asked our Imam about the inclusiveness of this ayah: "And there is not one of you but shall come to it [hell]" [19:71] he replied, "We passed through hell and it was extinguished." 'Ilm yaqin, vol. 2, p. 917.

[21]. Al-'Ayyashi narrates from Humran who asked Imam Baqir, Peace be with him, about the ayah mentioned, and he answered: "This is about those who will depart from the fire." Majma' al-bayan, vol. 10, p. 424.

[22]. Iqbal al-a'mal, "Works for the Month of Sha'ban," p. 685; and Misbah al-mutahajjid wa salah al-muta'abbid, p. 374; and Bihar al-anwar, vol. 91, p. 97-99, "kitab al-dhikr wa al- du'a' ", Chapler 32, hadith 12.

[23]. Bihar al-anwar, vol. 19, part 2, old edition, "bab al-ad'iyyah wa al-munajat," pp. 89-90.

[24]. From Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 7, p. 227, "The Book of Fasting," "Chapter on the Month of Ramadan," Ch. 18, hadith 20.

[25]. It is reported from Jabir that Abu Ja'far, Imam Baqir, Peace be with him, said: "The Prophet of Allah turned his face Inward the people and said: 'O company of people! When the crescent of the month of Ramadan appears, the rebellious Satans are locked up, and the doors of heaven, the doors of paradise and the doors of mercy are opened, and the doors to the Fire are shut, and prayers are answered.' " From Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 7, p. 224, "The Book of Fasting," "The Section on the precepts of the Fast of the Month of Ramadan," section 18, hadith 14.

[26]. The 'commanding self' is an expression used in the Quran, associated with one's base desires, cf. 12:53. (Tr.)

[27]. "Sibghat Allah," The colour of Allah, cf. 2:138, is the opposite of the "colour of Satan." (Tr.)

[28]. Abu Jafar [Imam Baqir], Peace be With him, said that the Apostle of Allah, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his progeny, said: "Shall I tell you of the believer? 1 he believer is one whom the believers trust with their lives and their property. Shall I tell you of the Muslim? The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands the Muslims are safe." From Usul al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 331, "kitab al-iman wa al-kufr" ("The Book of Faith and Infidelity"), "Chapter of the Believer, His signs and attributes," hadith 19.

[29]. For example, "And say: 'Work, so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Apostle and the believers; and you shall be brought back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, then He will inform you of what you did.' " (9:105) Also, Abu Basir reports that Imam Sadiq ('a) said: "Each morning, the deeds of the servants, the good ones and the bad ones, will be reviewed by the Apostle of Allah, Peace be upon him and his household, so be careful. This is what Allah, the Supreme, said: 'Work, so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Apostle.' " Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 318, "The Book of Hujjah," "Chapter on the Presentation of the deeds to the Apostle and the Imams, Peace be with them," hadith 1, 2-6. Al-Tafsir al-burhan, vol. 2, p. 157.

[30]. "The Night of Power" is a night near the end of Ramadan in which the Quran was revealed to the Prophet (s) and which, according to the Quran, is "a night better than one thousand months." Cf. Quran, Surat al-Qadr (97). (Tr.)

[31]. Furu' al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 63, "The Book of Fasting, "The Chapter of the Grace of the Fast and the one who Keeps the Fast," hadith 6.

[32]. Sahar is the period from the first light of the morning until sunrise. (Tr.)

[33]. Imam uses the expression " 'alam-e zulmani-ye tabi at," literally 'the dark world of nature,' but here, by 'nature' is not meant all things natural, as opposed to artificial, but unrefined and base. (Tr.)

[34]. "By Allah, if the seven climes and what is under their skies were offered to me to be sinful to Allah by taking the skin of a grain of barley from an ant, I would not do it." Nahj al-balaghah, Sermon 215.

[35]. Shimr was the assassin of Imam Husayn, Peace be with him, and symbolizes evil. (Tr.)

[36]. "He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand (raqibun 'atid)." (50 18)

[37]. In the advice given by the Commander of the Faithful (Imam 'Ali ['a]) to Nawf al- Bakali, it is stated: "Keep away from backbiting, for it will be food for the dogs of hell." Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 8, p. 600, "the Book of Hajj" "the Chapters on the Precepts of the Ten," Ch. 152, hadith 16.

[38]. It is reported that Aba 'Abd Allah (Imam Jafar), Peace he with him, said: "The head of all sins is love of the world." Usul al-al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 2, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "The Chapter on Love of the World and Avarice Toward It," hadith 1. Usul al-al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 197, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "The Chapter on Derogation of the World and Asceticism in respect of it," hadith 11. Bihar al-anwar, vol. 70, p. 1; and vol. 74, p. 178.

[39]. One of the symptoms of dropsy is inordinate thirst. In Arabic the disease is called istisqa and one who has the disease is mustasqa (Tr.)

[40]. "He (Iblis) said: "As You have caused me to remain disappointed, I will certainly lie in wait f or them in Your straight path." (7:16) In the exegesis of 'Ali ibn Ibrahim pertaining to this ayah, it is written: "If people tread the path of guidance, Satan tries to make them leave the path of religion." Tafsir of 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, vol. 1, p. 224; al-Tafsir al-burhan, vol.2,p.5.

[41]. In a narration from the family of the Prophet (s) under ayah 98, Surat al-An'am, pertaining to the phrase, "a resting place and a depository", it is said that the faiths of individuals may be divided into two kinds, fixed and borrowed, as in the narration from Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl from Musa ibn al-Ja'far ('a) who said: "Faith which is in a resting place will be fixed until the day of the resurrection. Faith which is in a depository will be taken by God prior to death." Tafsir al-'Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 401. In Nahj al-balaghah it is also to be found that: "A kind of faith is fixed in the heart, and another kind is loaned in the hearts and breasts until the time of death." Nahj al-balaghah, Sermon 231.

[42]. The phrase used is more literally, "sitting at the table of Imam Zaman ('a)," indicating that the religious students are provided for through religious donations. (Tr.)

[43]. The full text of the hadith is: "For God, the Glorious and Exalted, the world is without value; and among the creatures known to us which God has created, there is no existent more despicable to Him than the world, and since the time when He created the world, God has never looked kindly upon it." Bihar al-anwar, vol. 70, p. 110, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," Ch. 122, hadith 109.

[44]. It is narrated from Imam S3diq ('a): "Worship is of three kinds: one group worships God from fear, this is the worship of the servants; another group worships God in order to obtain a reward, this is the worship of hirelings; and the third group worships God, the Great and Lofty, because of love, and this is the worship of the free. And this is the most excellent worship" Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 45, "The Chapters of Introduclion to Worship," Ch. 9, hadith 1. Usul al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 131, " The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "Ch. on worship," hadith 5

[45]. It is narrated that Imam 'Ali ('a) said: "Verily, asking forgiveness is a degree of the 'Illiyyin, and it is a word that means six things. The first of them is regret for what has occurred. The second is resolve not to return to that evil ever again...." Nahj al-balaghah, p. 1281, hikmat 409.

For more information refer to "Forty hadiths: An Exposition" by Imam Khumayni, hadith 17, translated by 'A. Q. Qarati in the journal, al-Tawhid, vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 39-52. Note that the 'Illiyyin are the loftiest heights of heaven. Cf. Quran (83:17) (Tr.)

[46]. It is reported from Imam Baqir ('a): "There is no servant without a white spot on his heart. When a sin is performed a black spot appears on it. Then if he repents, this blackness is erased. But if he continues to sin, the blackness increases, until it covers the white. When the white is covered, one with such a heart never returns to excellence and goodness." Usul al-Kafi vol 3, p. 274, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "the Chapter of Sins," hadith 20.

[47]. Awali al li'ali vol. 1, p. 129, Ch. 8, hadith 3; al-Jami' al-saghir, vol. 2, p. 45, 95.

[48]. The maraji' taqlid are the sources of imitation for Islamic law. (Tr.)

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The Role of Reason in Ijtihad

Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from the Persian by Mahliqa Qara'i

Vol IV No. 2

In the previous discussion, "The Principle of Ijtihad in Islam", two trends in Islamic thought were referred to. One of them related to the subject of the justifiability or unjustifiability of the use of qiyas and ijtihad bi al-ra'y, a practice that acquired prevalence among different schools of fiqh. The other was regarding the controversy about Divine justice and reason as the criterion of moral and legal judgements (al-husn wal-qubh al-'aqliyyan) among the mutakallimun. These controversies actually revolved around the central issue of the role or the "rights" of reason.

Some schools of fiqh which supported qiyas, especially the Hanafi school, believed in the role of reason in ijtihad, which in their interpretation took the form of qiyas and ijtihad bi al-ra'y. But the other schools opposed to qiyas, especially the Zahiri school, did not approve of any role for reason, neither in the form of qiyas nor in any other form. Accordingly, the first group, while enumerating the sources of legislation, maintained that there were four: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, ijma' (consensus) and ijtihad (qiyas). But the second group did not go beyond the Qur'an, the Sunnah and, at the most, ijma'. Among the mutakallimun, the Mu'tazilah believed in the independent role of reason, and also in Divine justice and the rational basis of moral and legal judgements. They believed that the system of creation is established on the foundations of justice, and that the present system is the best possible. They also explained away the problem of evil in the world and believed that in the next world too punishment and reward will be according to the unalterable criteria of justice. The knowledge of these criteria is also within the province of reason. It is not possible that God should will anything that is not according to these definite rational criteria.

With regard to legislation, also, they believed that the Divine commands have been set forth according to the criteria of justice and with due attention to a series of real benefits and harms (that lie in obedience or disobedience to the laws). According to the Mu'tazilite doctrine, there is a purpose and aim hidden in every Divine Act, whether it relates to creation or legislation.

But the Asha'irah did not believe in any of the above-mentioned doctrines. They did not acknowledge Divine justice or the rational basis of moral and legal judgements. They did not believe that the world is based on the principle of justice and that the present system of creation is the best possible. Neither, according to them, in the other world matters will be decided on the criteria of justice, nor the system of Divine laws has been patterned to ensure a series of benefits and to avoid harms. They did not believe in any aim and purpose for Divine Acts either. According to their doctrine, the belief in the principle of justice, the belief in a rational basis of moral and legal judgements, and the belief that Divine Acts are subject to aims and purposes, usefulness and harmfulness, contradict the principle of tawhid and the idea of absolute freedom of God as a free actor. No law or principle can be set forth as a criterion of His Will thus imposing limits upon Him. God's Will is neither subordinate to any criteria nor is it subject to anv laws or principles; on the contrary all laws and principles are subject to and proceed from His Will. Judgements of reason cannot be relied upon to enable us to say definitely that such and such a thing is in accordance with justice or not. For instance, it cannot be said for certain that those people who obey God will be sent to heaven and those who sin to hell. His Will and Acts cannot be restricted by any of such rules. They interpret the following verse that says:

He will not be questioned as to that which He doth, but they will be questioned. (21:23)

to mean that it is not right to ask 'why' and 'wherefore' about His Acts. There is no criterion or standard applicable to Divine Acts so as to justify any question about God's Action or forbearance. The Asha'irah have formally objected to the statement that 'The Heavens stand on the foundations of justice', and said that it is not so; they point out that matters like pain and disease, the creation of Satan, social injustice and inequality, class distinctions, domination of the corrupt over the virtuous in the world, and the like, are things which are observable through reason, and, if the order of the universe were based on justice, should not have existed. As for the religious laws and precepts, they have formally declared that they are not based on wisdom and prudence.

They say that the Shari'ah and its laws bring together disparities and separate similarities. Many matters, in spite of their being unlike, have the same judgement, and many other matters in spite of their being similar and parallel have different judgements applicable to them. They have mentioned various examples, to mention which is not possible here. Anyhow, according to the Ash'arite doctrine, the process of creation is not subject to the principle of justice; rather, justice is subordinated to creation. In the same way, the laws of the Shari'ah are also not subject to any real underlying benefits or harms; rather, benefit and harm, good and evil, are subservient to the provisions of the Shari'ah. That is, if we are to speak about justice and injustice, right and wrong, beneficial and harmful, what we should mean is that whatever God does is just, good and beneficial, not that God does what is just, good and beneficial.

This kind of thinking is not without similarity to the trend that existed among the ancient

Greek thinkers and the Sophists two thousand and five hundred years ago about reality and the worth of human thought and ideas. They raised the question whether reality is something which exists and our minds and their ideas, in order to be valid, should correspond to reality, or whether it is not so and reality is subject to our minds. For instance, during philosophical and scientific contemplation, we may make a statement about something and say that such and such is the case. Now does our statement correspond to some reality independent of our minds, which would be true if it corresponded with that reality? Or whether, on the contrary, truth and reality are subservient to our minds, and whatever we perceive is the truth? And since it is possible that different individuals should perceive something in diverse ways, truth is relative to each one of them, being different from what it is for others? Therefore, truth and reality are relative?

What a group of Muslim mutakallimun have said about religion in relation to truth, goodness, justice and benefit was said before them by the Greek Sophists about the mind in relation to reality and truth. The arguments presented by the Sophists for proving their claim resemble those advanced by this group of mutakallimun. Due to this similarity it would be right to give them the name of 'Islamic sophists'.

This group of mutakallimun believed that they had discovered various contradictions, equal treatment of disparities, and unequal treatment of similarities in Islamic laws. They maintained that, on account of these contradictions, it is not possible for any real benefits and harms to be the criteria of religious laws. Therefore, it is the religious laws that are the criteria of good and bad, benefit and harm.

The Sophists had also made an excuse of the contradictions and errors of reason and perception, to hold that due to these contradictions it is not possible for a reality which is transcendental to the mind, and which the mind should follow, to exist. Reality, on the other hand, is a function of the mind. The answer given by philosophers to Greek and non-Greek sophists is also similar to the one given by the 'Adlites (those who believed in Divine justice, 'adl) to that group of mutakallimun, but here we shall abstain from going into further details.

The doctrine of taswib (lit. ratification) held by this group of mutakallimun is totally similar to the theory of relativism. According to the theory of relativity of truth, whatever one perceives is truth in relation to him though in relation to others it may be error, not truth. Also according to the theory of taswib, whatever one mujtahid may deduce is correct as far as he himself is concerned, although it may not be so for others.

On the Crossroads:

There are many problems which are theoretically of profound significance, but practically are not so important. There are also many problems which are not so important regarding their theoretical value but from the practical point of view they are of extraordinary significance.

For instance, in theology we have the problem of Divine Attributes, which is of great importance so far as theory is concerned but is of little practical utility. For example, the study of and inquiry into the question whether the Attributes of God are identical with His Essence or not can be an important subject for theoretical study, but from the practical point of view it is of little consequence which one of the two doctrines you choose; it does not influence the life and behaviour of a Muslim society. But the problem of jabr or tafwid (predestination or freedom) is important from the theoretical point of view as much as it is valuable for its practical aspect. Because the belief in the doctrines of determinism and fatalism and the negation of every kind of human freedom ruin the spirit of action and kill every kind of dynamism.

The problem of Divine justice and belief in rational criteria of moral and legal judgements occupies the most important position in Islamic thought due to its great influence on the intellectual and scientific history and behaviour of Muslims. It is a fact that those who discussed and studied this issue soon arrived at the crossroads, where they had either to accept religious laws as based on a reality discoverable by reason, to try as far as possible to discover that rational basis, to acknowledge a purpose and meaning of religion, to try to discover those purposes and objectives, and to recognize reason as an "inner proof and an "internal prophet" and to accept the definite judgements of reason as enjoying the approval of the Divine Lawgiver; or to consider the aim and purpose of the Shari'ah as entailing mere obligation and acts of absolute servility devoid of any objective, and close all the doors on research and intellectual inquiry.

How much it matters whether we conceive religion in terms of external forms and shapes, viewing any change in external forms and appearances as a change of essence and content, and, imagining some kind of inherent correspondence between those forms and the very spirit of religion, recognize that soul in every form and shape! And what a great difference it makes whether we consider the universal laws of Islam, which cover a wide range of social and ethical problems and concern all modes of human life, as based upon a series of realities relating to spiritual health and well-being and innate human rights, or if we deny the existence of those realities and believe, for instance, that vices like jealousy, falsehood, and suspiciousness are bad because they have been forbidden by the Lawgiver, and virtues like truthfulness, honesty, and benevolence are good as they have been commanded by Him, as if there is no difference between them in reality. Similarly, human rights also are to be acknowledged as such on account of their being set forth by the Islamic lawgiver, or else had they been determined in some other fashion that would have been equally right. Justice and oppression are also defined in the light of these commandments, and if something else had been enjoined, justice and injustice would have been defined in quite a different way.

The Shi'ite Position:

The two above-mentioned intellectual trends were discussed from the point of view of Sunni

fiqh and kalam. Now it is necessary to study them from the Shi'ite point of view also. The early Shi'ite logic concerning the first of the two trends is extremely sensitive and interesting. As for the first trend, that is, regarding the problem of justifiability or unjustifiability of qiyas, Shi'ah rejected qiyas on the basis of the express texts (nusus) of their Imams. As mentioned in the former discussion, the Shi'ah disapproved of qiyas for two reasons:

Firstly, the use of qiyas was justified by others for the reason that the problems to be solved are unlimited, whereas the dicta of the Shari'ah are limited; therefore they are forced to resort to it. The Shi'ah do not accept this reason because, they say, it is not necessary that every event and problem should have a specified rule. General rules applicable to all situations are given in the Shari'ah. The only thing needed is competent ijtihad, inquiry and reflection to derive the particular from the general. Many ahadith narrated from the Imams (A) and recorded in the collections of hadith, like al-Kafi, etc., make the same point.

Secondly, qiyas is something which is based upon conjecture, surmise, and superficial similarities, and is a kind of interference made by reason in such matters which are not intelligible. At one time we may be concerned with the course of action in a case when reason comprehends a fact with certainty and clarity. At other times, in cases where the matter is not comprehensible to reason, is it justifiable to follow conjecture and surmise? There is of course a great difference between the two kinds of situations, but evidently if the foundations of the religion are to be laid on ra'y, qiyas, surmise and guess-work, it will lead to its destruction. This was the position held by the Shi'ah with regard to the first trend.

As for the second, had the Shi'ah logic in rejecting qiyas been similar to that of its other opponents who rejected it because they did not believe in the rational basis of the religious laws and that they were based on facts of nature, they too would have been forced to take a hostile stand against the doctrines of Divine justice and the rational basis of moral and legal judgements. However, as we have seen, the Shi'ah's reasons for rejecting qiyas were different. Therefore, in spite of strongly disapproving qiyas, they formally affirmed the share of reason in ijtihad. The Shi'ite fuqaha' and the usuliyyun officially recognized reason as one of the four sources of fiqh and the Shi'ite mutakallimun earnestly supported the doctrine of justice, to the extent that it came to be said: "'Adl and tawhid are 'Alawids."

It is here that the sensitiveness of the Shi'ite stand comes to light. On the one hand they accepted the share of reason, and on the other they discarded qiyas and ra'y as something based upon surmise and conjecture. In fact, with utmost discernment they followed the real path of the Qur'an, which eloquently approves of the use of reason but disapproves of surmise and conjecture, and considers it invalid.

The Shi'ah occupied a very delicate position between the right and the left, and a little deviation from the middle path was enough to expose them to the danger of qiyas on the one side and on the other to that of servile obscurantism and stagnant formalism.

However, during the later years, when the pointer of the scale tilted in favour of the Asha'riah, and even the Hanafis, who stood at the remotest point from the Ash'arite doctrine, became inclined towards them, how long could the Shi'ah adhere to the middle course and be able to advance at the same time without deviating either towards the extreme of qiyas or towards that of a stagnant formalism? It is a matter that deserves to be studied in its scientific and historical detail. Here we can briefly point out two things:

Firstly during the course of the intellectual history of Islam, all the sects and groups influenced one another. The 'Adlites were influenced by the ideas of non-'Adlites and the non-'Adlites by those of the 'Adlites. The influence of ideas was reciprocal, and naturally the Shi'ah also couldn't remain aloof from it.

Secondly, if we examine the extant works of Shi'ite scholars, we shall find the anti-qiyas sensitivity of the early days to prevail right up to the present. It is hard to find a single scholar among the Shi'ite fuqaha' to exhibit any pro-qiyas tendencies, and if a very small number of scholars had such tendencies, they belonged to the former times not to the later ages. Therefore, there is complete certainty as to the absence of deviation towards this extreme. However such a sensitivity regarding deviation towards the other extreme is not so evident. Those who are in the know of it know well that the terms 'Adlites and non-'Adlites have only ceremonial implications in the vocabulary of the later scholars. Had the way paved by the 'Adlites in the past been followed, it would have been the source of the origination of many of the social sciences among Muslims - the sciences whose fountainhead was discovered by the Europeans gradually one thousand years after the Muslims' discovery of it.

The interest in truth and justice as independent realities, on the part of the Europeans, gave rise to social, political and economic philosophies and scientific and judicial disciplines on the one hand, and on the other served as the source of awakening of nations and infused in them the feeling of life's worthiness.

The Muslims could not continue their journey on the path that was discovered by them and recognize the source and origin of human rights as being inherent in nature. They failed to discover the primary bases of the Islamic legal system and the social philosophy of Islam and to explain it to others and make use of that general basis in the deduction of the laws of the Shari'ah.

In the opinion of the specialists, the Islamic legal system is one of the most valuable legal systems of the world. In the East greater emphasis was laid on ethics than on law, contrary to the West, where either the case was opposite, or at least the same emphasis was laid on the two. The distinction belongs to Islam of paying equal attention to both ethics and law. But the Muslims, due to various reasons and factors, gave more importance to ethics and neglected the Islamic legal system.

Possibly, the above discussion about the role of reason and the doctrine of justice may give rise to the misconception that since Islamic laws are based upon the interests of the individual and society it is good to indulge naively in speculation and try to find some philosophy behind Islamic laws and rituals and conjure up reasons for such acts, for instance, as tayammum (ritual purification by sand when water cannot be obtained), ghusl (bathing), madmadah (mouth washing) or istinshaq (drawing water into the nose during the wudu') and to abstain from performing them as long as the underlying rationale has not been found. I should clarify that my purpose is not this. What I wish to say is that Islamic laws and precepts, whether they concern civil rights, penal laws, social relations or some other aspect, are based on a series of truths and facts. If we acquire the knowledge of those facts through a scientific method appropriate to their study - whose principles have been mostly discovered in our present-day world - we will be able to understand the meaning of and rationale behind Islamic laws, which have reached us through revelation, in a better way. For instance, through the Holy Qur'an as well as through the teachings of the leaders of the Din, great aphorisms and ethical rules have reached us. These sayings and injunctions have been always accessible to everyone. But is it possible for everyone at present, or was it possible for those in the past, to analyze them fully and to understand perfectly their aim and spirit without being misled?

Unless one does have complete knowledge of the scientific fundamentals of ethics and psychology, it is not possible for him to grasp the spirit of those words of wisdom, which appear to be simple at first sight. The real value and sublimity of those heavenly sayings become clearer if anyone studies the various ethical systems of the world with their occasionally divergent aims and principles.

To give another example, in the Holy Qur'an, as well as in the words of the Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams (A), we come across a great number of discourses regarding tawhid and the Names and Attributes of God. Those who have spent their lives studying tawhid and theology know that sometimes they come across statements in the Qur'an and the Nahj al-balaghah with an underlying ocean of meaning, whereas the same expressions and sentences led the Ahl al-Hadith, the Hanbalis and the Zahiris to anthropomorphism and heresy. What is the reason? This is because, since knowledge is the key to revelation, whatever has been received through revelation, despite its simplicity and universal utility, is an extract of reality which can be arrived at only through science.

At the time of the last Hajj, while encouraging the people to memorize and preserve whatever they heard from him, and to convey to the future generations, the Prophet (S) said:

How often one conveys knowledge to another who is more learned than himself.

The one who hears ahadith may possess more power of understanding and analysis than the narrator himself. He may comprehend its spirit, purpose and meaning in a better way on account of his superior knowledge. The religion can be understood better in the light of

knowledge. The secret of greatness and miraculous character of the holy religion of Islam lies in the immense scope of its teachings; and if any aspect of nature is illuminated by means of science, it not only does not make obsolete the teachings of Islam but makes them brighter and clearer.

In the realm of the spiritual, in relation to the mystic path, those who have been successful in grasping the hidden meaning of the discourses relating to this topic, have been those who have had familiarity with that realm. Ibn Abi al-Hadid says that the gist of what all mystics have said can be seen in the few sentences of the sermon of the Imam 'Ali (A) commencing with the words:

[...]

In short, knowledge is the key to religion. The scope of Islamic teachings and laws covers all modes and aspects of human life, and, definitely, the more we come to know about a sphere of human life and scientific principles related to it, the greater the benefit we shall be able to draw from the bounty of Divine revelation. If merely the knowledge of Arabic language were sufficient for the understanding of the religion, a simple Arab would have been able to draw as much amount of benefit from its teachings as a philosopher (hakim-e ilahi).

The bases of human rights, also, are not an exception to this general rule. Like ethics and theology, the rights are also based upon a series of natural truths. The more we are acquainted with those fundamental truths and principles, the better can we understand the aim and purpose of the religion. If we know those principles and fundamentals, perhaps we shall recognize many of the verses of the Qur'an and traditions as relating to ahkam which hitherto have not been counted as having any legal significance. However, for the time being, it is not possible to go into further details.

Thus, our aim is not that we should philosophize or speculate about the rationale of Islamic laws and precepts. We aim to point out that since the teachings of Islam cover all spheres of human life, and since, on the basis of our belief in the doctrine of Divine justice, we know that these teachings are not extravagant and baseless, but are based upon truth and natural realities and are constituted on the basis of those realities, so if we come to know closely those realities - which have been systematically studied in the course of several centuries and their study has taken the form of scientific disciplines - we shall be better able to comprehend the meanings and purposes of the language of revelation (wahy), as we have seen in the study of ethics and theology.

In Islam, there are laws associated with economy, society, government and politics. Now all of them are considered to be subject to a series of unalterable and fixed laws. Therefore, how can anyone without the knowledge of those laws claim to have comprehended perfectly the viewpoint and purpose of Islam regarding matters relating to them and present them before

the world as the most sublime of social teachings? If an ordinary person without knowing anything about hikmat-e ilahi can comprehend the verses and traditions related to tawhid and other topics of theology as well as a philosopher who has worked diligently and understands well the basics of philosophy, then any person ignorant of the sciences can also comprehend and understand the viewpoint of Islam concerning various social problems to the extent of a social scientist.

Islam, according to the express text of the Qur'an, is the religion of nature. On the other hand we observe that a group of scientists and scholars have claimed that some of the human rights are natural and inborn, hence permanent and fixed, general and universal, and are prior to all other positive rights. Is it not necessary to investigate this problem, to see whether this is true? If it is, it is evident that Islam acknowledges them formally.

Is it true that things like the freedom of the individual, equality, the right to private property and ownership, the freedom of belief, the freedom of expression and the like are rooted in the human nature and are laws prescribed by nature itself, and that their acknowledgement constitutes the basic condition for the development of all human societies and wholesome human relations?

Do human rights precede social existence? Does the individual possess them prior to his social existence, and does social existence mean that every individual participates in society with the capital of his prior and essential rights, thus establishing a kind of association with the help of other individuals? Or the rights of an individual in society are posterior to society and that social existence is the source and origin of the individual's rights? Or does the individual in himself have no rights whatsoever; whatever he has are duties and responsibilities alone, and rights belong to society, as some have said?

What is the basis for determining rights? Is it the interests of the individual or those of society? To what extent is it necessary to protect the rights of the individual? Is the limit for the protection of the rights of the individual the point where such protection interferes with the right of other individuals, or occasionally this limit is set when the individual's rights conflict with the interests of society? These, and hundreds of such questions, have to be answered, and incidentally we have received guidelines and teachings in Islam regarding all of them. If those guidelines were compiled and given a scientific form, it would elucidate the great value of Islamic teachings and open many of the present dead-ends.

Therefore, by emphasis on the share of reason we neither mean to support the practice of qiyas and ra'y, which was innovated in the olden days, nor the practice of speculation, which has become customary in our age. The aim is to stress the scientific study of problems which are covered in the great scope of the teachings of Islam, whose resourcefulness and problem-solving potential has been recurringly proved to us in the course of the last fourteen centuries. This is the only lasting miraculous aspect of this monotheistic faith.

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The terms 'mujtahid' and 'ijtihad' are nowadays among those which have acquired great currency, even sanctity, among the Shi'ah. One would be surprised to know that the term ijtihad was formerly, from the times of the Prophet (S) and for several successive centuries, a Sunni term. It became Shia after undergoing a change of meaning, or what would be more precise to say, the term remained specifically Sunni for several centuries and became 'Muslim', in the wider sense, that is, after undergoing a change of meaning and dissociating itself from its earlier particular sense.

As to its not being a Shi'i term formerly, there is no doubt; if there is any uncertainty, it is about the date of its acceptance by the Shi'ah. It is not improbable that this term like several groups of people in the seventh century was converted to Shi'ism at the hands of the absolute Ayatullah, al-'Allamah al-Hilli. However, as we shall presently explain, the conversion came after its undergoing a change of meaning.

Apparently, there seems to be no doubt that this term was never used by any of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). The terms ijtihad and mujtahid, in the sense in which they are used by Shi'ah and Sunni fuqaha', have not been used in any of their ahadith. Neither they themselves were ever known by the epithet 'mujtahid' nor did they ever use it for the scholars and legists from among their companions. Otherwise the root relating to such terms as fatwa and ifta, which convey approximately the modern sense of ijtihad, and its derivatives do occur in the ahadith. For instance, al-'Imam al-Baqir (A) is reported to have said to Aban ibn Taghlib:

> Sit in the mosque of al-Madinah and give fatwas for the people . Indeed I love more like you to be seen amongst my Shi'ah.

And in a famous hadith, al-'Imam al-Sadiq (A) is reported to have said to 'Unwan al-Basri:

> Avoid giving fatwa in the way you would run away from a lion; do not make

your neck a bridge for the people.

The reason for the former unpopularity of the word is that during the early centuries of the Islamic era - that is also the period in which the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) lived - the word, due to the specific meaning it carried, was not acceptable to the Imams (A). Naturally, it could not have played any role in their teachings. However, after undergoing a gradual change of meaning, when it came to be used in a different sense by Sunni fuqaha' themselves, it was also adopted by Shi'ite fiqh. Now we shall briefly describe the background of the Sunni usage of this term.

'Ijtihad' in the Sunni Tradition:

Sunni scholars narrate a hadith that the Prophet (S), while sending Mu'adh to Yemen, asked him as to on what he would base his judgement. "In accordance with the Book of Allah", replied Mu'adh, "But what if you don't find it there?" inquired the Prophet (S). "According to the Sunnah of the Apostle of Allah", replied Mu'adh. "But what if you don't find it there too?" asked the Prophet (S) again. 'I will exert my own opinion', replied Mu'adh.

The Prophet (S) put his hand on Mu'adh's chest and said: "Thank God for assisting His Apostle with what he loves." They have narrated other traditions on the subject to the effect that either the Prophet (S) directly commanded his Companions to exercise ijtihad in case they could not find a rule in the Book and the Sunnah, or to the effect that he approved of the practice of his Companions that practised ijtihad. To the Sunnis, this is something definite, confirmed by consensus (ijma').

About the Holy Prophet (S) himself, they have said that some of his injunctions were purely based on personal ijtihad not on revelation. Even in their works on jurisprudence ('ilm al-'usul) the problem is raised whether or not the Prophet (S) could make errors in his personal ijtihad. They have narrated traditions in this regard and transmitted reports of the Companions as to how they justified their own actions or those of others on the basis of ijtihad. We abstain from quoting any of them here for the sake of brevity.

It is evident that in all the above instances the term ijtihad is not used in its current sense, that is, making the utmost effort in deducing rules of the Shari'ah from the related sources (adillah). The meaning of ijtihad there is 'exercising of one's opinion or judgement' (al-'amal bi al-ra'y). It means that in a case where the Divine dicta are absent or implicit, one should see what would be more acceptable to one's intelligence and taste, or nearer to truth and justice, or analogous to other Islamic laws, and to adopt it for his judgement. Accordingly, ijtihad is also accounted as one of the sources of Islamic legislation, like the Quran and the Sunnah, although not as a source parallel to these two. So long as a rule is to be found in the Quran and the Sunnah, the need for ijtihad does not arise. However, in absence of relevant dicta in the Quran, the Sunnah or ijma', ijtihad becomes a source of legislation. On this basis, they

have said that the sources of legislation are four: the Book, the Sunnah, ijma', and ijtihad (i.e. qiyas).

Also, according to this approach, ijtihad is not synonymous with expertise in Islamic law (faqahah), nor is the term mujtahid synonymous with faqih. Rather, ijtihad is one of the functions of the faqih. The faqih should have knowledge of the Quran and the hadith corpus; he should be able to distinguish the nasikh from the mansukh, the 'amm from the khass, the mujmal from the mubayyan, and the muhkam from the mutashabih. He should be familiar with the Quranic vocabulary and terminology, know the circumstances in which a particular verse was revealed (sha'n al-nuzul), and have knowledge of the successive generations of narrators and transmitters of hadith. He should also be able to reconcile the apparently conflicting traditions. In addition to all that, he should practise ijtihad and exercise his personal judgements in particular cases.

What was the character and basis of that ijtihad? Did the term ijtihad found in hadith mean exercising qiyas? Did the Prophet (S) and his Companions practise ijtihad in this sense. Did it also apply to other practices such as istihsan? Al-Shafi'i, in his famous Risalah, has a chapter on ijtihad, which follows the one on ijma', and is itself followed by one on istihsan. In his discussion of the subject, al-Shafi'i draws the conclusion that the ijtihad prescribed by the Shari'ah is confined to qiyas and that other types of ijtihad, such as istihsan, do not have any canonical grounds. Al-Shafi'i believes that the canonical grounds for qiyas are identical with those for ijtihad.

There were other questions that were debated by Sunni fuqaha', such as: Are ijtihad and al-'amal bi al-ra'y confined to cases where there is no express text (nass) or whether one may do ijtihad (called ta'awwul in this case) and exercise his judgement despite the presence of express texts? What are the conditions applicable to Sunnah if it is to preponderate ijtihad? Are all traditions narrated from the Prophet (S) to be relied upon and given precedence over ijtihad? Is reliable hadith confined to those which are mashhur and mustafid, as Abu Hanifah believed? Who are those who had the right of ijtihad and whose ijtihad was binding (hujjah) for the others? On what grounds have the others no right to go against their ijtihad? Evidently, to go into the details of each of these questions is outside the scope of this paper. However, it is necessary to mention some relevant points here:

1. The position of the fuqaha' and imams of the Ahl al-Sunnah with respect to the acceptability of ijtihad, in the above-mentioned sense, is not the same. Some of them give a wider scope to ijtihad and qiyas and some restrict it. Some altogether reject qiyas and ijtihad.

Abu Hanifah, who lived in Iraq and was considered the jurist of the Iraqis, because of the many conditions he required for a tradition to be acceptable, and also on account of being distant from the centre of hadith, which was the Hijaz, had lesser knowledge of hadith. Also due to other reasons, including his background of kalam and logic, he took greater recourse to

qiyas and on this account was strongly opposed by the Sunni jurists of his time and those who came after him.

Malik ibn Anas spent his life in al-Madinah and made lesser use of qiyas. Reportedly, he did not use qiyas except in a few cases, and, according to a report of Ibn Khallikan, was greatly repentant at the time of his death of having taken recourse to qiyas in his fatwas even in those few cases.

Al-Shafi'i, who belonged to the Iraqi school and had studied under Abu Hanifah's pupils and had as well studied under Malik in al-Madinah, took a middle road between Malik and Abu Hanifah.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was more a muhaddith than a faqih and avoided qiyas even to a greater extent than Malik Ibn Anas.

Dawud ibn Ali al-Zahiri al-'Isfahani, the founder of the Zahiri school, was altogether opposed to the practice of qiyas and regarded it as an innovation (bid'ah) in the faith.

As a consequence of these differences there emerged among the Ahl al-Sunnah two general trends: one of them was represented by the Ahl al-Hadith and the other by the Ahl al-Ra'y. The Ahl al-Hadith, or the Traditionists, attached lesser or no significance to qiyas and ra'y and the Ahl al-Ra'y in turn relied to a lesser extent on ahadith.

2. Concurrently with the emergence of the Ahl al-Ra'y and the Ahl al-Hadith, a problem that arose among the contemporary circles of kalam was that of the rational basis of legal judgements (al-husn wa al-qubh al-'aqliyyan). Although at first sight there seems to be no link between these two developments, because one of them belonged to fiqh and took place in juristic circles and the other belonged to the circles of kalam, but, as pointed by some historians, the theory of rational basis of judgement - which was raised by the Mu'tazilah and who staunchly defended it - was also intended to find some kind of basis for ijtihad, i.e. qiyas and the practice of ra'y. According to this theory, the laws of the Shari'ah were based on a series of real benefits and harms and that human reason was capable of independently discovering those benefits and harms inherent in things; therefore reason was capable of discovering the purposes and criteria of the laws of religion through ijtihad and ra'y.

This conjecture is further strengthened if we remember that the Ahl al-Hadith, who later, in the fourth/tenth century, came to be known as Asha'riah, represented the chief opposition to the Mu'tazilah.

3. Right from the first century, from the time when groups of people gathered in mosques for the purpose of study and debate, some persons debated about the issues of halal and haram. They gathered around them pupils and adherents from among the common people, who

regarded their fatwas as authoritative and referred to them their questions about halal and haram. Such was the beginning of the gradual development of a class of scholars who later came to be called fuqaha'. Every region, city and group followed a certain individual, and the rulers had not yet adopted the policy of following the fatwas of a certain jurist as official law.

The emergence of this class of jurists did not require any special conditions. Occasionally, social conditions demanded that one prominent individual should be recognized by the people and followed in religious precepts. Gradually, this resulted in the emergence of diverse legal approaches and schools, which in turn were preserved and perpetuated by the pupils of the originator after his death. In this way, various legal schools and sects emerged amongst the Sunnis, the most famous of them being the Hanafi, the Shafi'i, the Maliki, the Hanbali and the Zahiri schools. Of course, the founders of these schools were not the only early jurists and mujtahidun that were there. There were others who held their own legal opinions and were not followers of anyone. However, this independence gradually disappeared after the fourth/ tenth century and no independent mujtahid emerged after this time in the Sunni tradition. Apparently, the last person to have been an independent mujtahid with his own independent approach in legal issues was the well-known historian and exegete Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/922), who although famous for his work on history, is considered a Sunni faqih of the first rank.

The later Sunni mujtahids were either al-mujtahid al-mutlaq al-muntasib or mujtahid al-fatwa (also occasionally known as mujtahid al-madhhab). 'Al-mujtahid al-mutlaq al-muntasib' means a mujtahid who is attached to one of the well-known schools and follows the juristic approach of its founder but in deducing legal rules, on the basis of the school's juristic principles, he may formulate his own independent legal opinions which may be different from the legal opinions of the founder. For instance, while being a Shafi'i or a Hanafi in jurisprudence, he may differ with al-Shafi'is or Abu Hanifah's express fatwas in legal matters. A number of eminent Sunni jurists are considered to belong to this class, such as: Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwaym, Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Sabbagh, and others.

Mujtahid al-madhhab' or 'mujtahid al-fatwa' is someone who follows the founder of the school in all matters in which the founder has expressly given his views. However in issues in which he does find an opinion of the founder, he may exercise his own Ijtihad and give fatwa .

Accordingly, Ijtihad is of three kinds: independent Ijtihad, semi-independent Ijtihad (al-'ijtihad al-mutlaq al-muntasib), and Ijtihad within the framework of the juristic and legal positions of a school (Ijtihad al-fatwa).

In any case, the mujtahids who came after the fourth century did not find any followers. On the other hand the mujtahids who came before this period were not limited to the four imams of the popular schools; there were nine other eminent jurists of whom some lived before the

four imams - such as al-Hasan al-Basri - some were their contemporaries - such as Sufyan al-Thawri - and some who came after them - such as Dawud al-Zahiri and Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari - and all of them had more or less followers among the people. However, there was a gradual rise in the followers of the four imams, for, according to al-Maqfizi in al-Khitat, al-Malik al-Zahir, the ruler of Egypt, officially declared in the year 665/1257 that except the four schools - Shafi'i Maliki, Hanafi and Hanbali - other schools had no official recognition and that no judge had the right to give judgement except on the basis of the four schools. The people were also strictly forbidden to follow any except the four schools. This was the beginning of the restriction of the official schools to four.'

This brief description shows that when we talk of the closure of the door of Ijtihad in the Sunni tradition, we refer to the Ijtihad of the first kind, i.e. independent ijtihad. As to the second kind (al-Ijtihad al-mutlaq al-muntasib) and the third kind (ijtihad al-madhhab), their doors have remained open.

Why should the doors of independent ijtihad have been closed after the fourth century and no one should have right to complete independence and be bound to follow one of the imams in jurisprudence? Why and for what reason is it not permissible today to follow anyone except the four imams? Why should one who follows any one of the imams follow him in all issues and have no right to follow the other three by exercising discretion in some issues? Sunni scholars have given various answers to all of these questions and none of them is convincing.

Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi (d. 1180/1765), in a treatise (risalah) called "al-'Insaf fi bayan sabab al-'ikhtilaf" - which has been quoted by Farid al-Wajdi under jahada in the Da'irat al-Ma'arif, with the remark that it is the best treatise written on the topic - acclaims the closure of the door of independent ijtihad and the latter scholars' imitation of one of the early imams and says: that is, 'It is a secret that God Almighty has inspired in the scholars with' to safeguard Islam and protect the religion from disintegration. Farid al-Wajdi himself does not approve of the prohibition on Ijtihad and does not confirm those words of Shah Wali Allah.

Two years ago, according to what we have read in papers and have heard, the great 'Allamah Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut, the mufti and rector of Al-'Azhar University, with great courage characteristic of great reformers, broke this thousand-year-old spell and officially announced that the door of ijthad is open and that there is nothing objectionable about a follower of one school referring to the judgements of another school in case they are supported by firmer arguments. He also announced in an official fatwa that it is correct to follow the Ja'fari school of fiqh, just like the other schools. Subsequently, a chair of comparative legal studies was established at al-'Azhar. Undoubtedly this was the greatest step that was taken since the beginnings of Islamic jurisprudence for the sake of the benefit and general welfare of Muslims. Its worth will be better recognized in the future.

4. Another problem related to the subject of Ijtihad is that of takhti'ah (admission of the

possibility of error in the judgements of the mujtahid) and taswib (confirmation of the mujtahid's infallibility and denial of any possibility of error), which has throughout been a topic of debate in books on kalam and usul al-fiqh. Generally, it is mentioned in books on usul that the Shi'ah fuqaha' admit possibility of error in the mujtahid's fatwas and are accordingly called mukhatti'ah (derived from khata': error), whereas the Sunni fuqaha' believe that the mujtahid is always right in his judgements, and are hence called musawwibah (derived from sawab: that which is right). However, it is not the case that all the Sunni fuqaha' support taswib; rather, only a small number of them have accepted this view. In any case, for the Shi'ah, who define Ijtihad as 'the effort to deduce the real law from the sources of the Shari'ah', it is difficult to imagine that every mujtahid should be always right. It is not possible that whatever any mujtahid may judge should be correct and his judgement should be the real law; for it is possible that different mujtahids may hold divergent opinions simultaneously about a certain subject and the same mujtahid may hold different opinions at different times about the same issue. How is it possible that he should always be right?

The roots of the theory of taswib lie in a certain theory of Ijtihad which is held by those who define ijtihad as the practice of qiyas and ra'y . They claim that the laws received by the Prophet (S) through revelation are limited, whereas issues and problems which require legislation are unlimited in number. Therefore, the laws given by the Divine Lawgiver are not adequate to meet the requirements. Accordingly, God has given the right to the scholars of the Ummah, or a group of them, to employ their personal taste and intelligence in cases where there are no religious dicta and select something which resembles other Islamic laws and is closer to the criteria of justice and truth. In accordance with this reasoning, they accept the theory of taswib, for, according to this view of ijtihad, it is itself one of the sources of the Divine Law.

The idea of taswib was unimaginable to the minds of Shi'ah jurisprudents, because they had taken for granted the principle that every event or problem should have a real Divine law related to it. Ijtihad, to them, meant inquiry and effort to discover that law with the help of reliable canonical sources. Of course, in the light of such an outlook of ijtihad it is impossible that every mujtahid should be right.

The theory of taswib, however, does not rest on such an outlook of Ijtihad. It rests on an outlook which regards it as impossible that God should have legislated laws regarding every kind of situation. Because, if such were the case, they should have been set forth in the Book and the Sunnah; but the laws given in the Book and the Sunnah are limited in number, whereas situations are innumerable and unlimited. Hence God has given the 'ulama' of the Ummah the right to legislate through Ijtihad such laws as have not been given through revelation. Since this right is God-given, the judgements of the mujtahid are the actual laws of God.

The problem of taswib and takhti'ah has been debated a lot in books on kalam and usul, and here our purpose was just to refer to the abovementioned point. The above discussion related

to the Sunni background of the term ijtihad; now we shall turn to the change of meaning that this term underwent, which resulted in its acceptance by the Shi'ah.

'Ijtihad' in the Shi'ah Tradition:

Until the fourth/tenth and the fifth/eleventh centuries we observe that whenever the word is used by a scholar it carries the sense of qiyas and ra'y. For instance, Shaykh Abu Ja'far al-Tusi (d. 460/1067), in his 'Uddat al-'usul, devotes a chapter to qiyas. He devotes another chapter to Ijtihad where he discusses one of the issues related to ijtihad, i.e. the problem of taswib and takhti'ah. The book has another chapter entitled "Did the Prophet practise ijtihad, and whether it was legitimate for him to practise it? Was it legitimate for the Companions of the Prophet to practise ijtihad when they were away from him or were in his presence?" Later, in the course of his discussion, he says: "This controversy is basically uncalled for according to our doctrines, because, as we have proved earlier, qiyas and ijtihad are absolutely impermissible in the Shari'ah. "

This remark of al-Shaykh al-Tusi shows that until his age the word Ijtihad was still used in the sense of ra'y and qiyas.

'Ijtihad' lexically means 'putting in utmost effort' in doing something. In the earliest days, the term in accordance with the traditions ascribed to the Prophet (S) and the Companions, was taken to mean ijtihad bi al-ra'y, or putting in utmost effort in the exercise of ra'y and qiyas. However, gradually it took a wider meaning and came to mean putting in utmost effort in discovering the laws of the Shari'ah from its reliable sources. Thus we see that al-Ghazali (d. 505/1 111) in his al-Mustasfa - although he uses the word recurringly in its earlier sense of qiyas, for instance, when he says:

> They have differed as to the permissibility of practising qiyas and ijtihad during the days of the Prophet ... (vol. 2, p. 354)

He also uses it in the general sense of scholarly effort on the part of a faqih

> It (ijtihad) means putting in of the utmost effort in doing something. But the term has come to be used in the terminology of scholars specifically for the mujtahids putting in of the utmost effort in acquiring the knowledge of the laws of the Shariah. (vol. 2, p. 350)

From this time onwards we see that the term is used less frequently in the special sense of ra'y and qiyas and takes on the sense of scholarly effort in discovering the laws of the Shari'ah. With this change, the term found way into the Shi'ite fiqh also, for earlier the Shi'ah had opposed it on account of their opposition to Ijtihad bi al-ra'y, not because they were opposed to scholarly diligence. In any case, they did not resist its use after it changed its meaning.

Probably the first to use this term among the Shi'ah Imamiyyah scholars was al-'Allamah al-Hilli (d. 726/1326), who accepting it used it in its second sense in his work Tahdhib al-'usul. In that work he devotes a chapter to Ijtihad and uses it in the sense current today. It seems that it was from this time that the Shi'ah accepted the word or the word embraced Shi'ism.

We said earlier that the opposition to qiyas was not limited to the Shi'ah and there were schools among Sunnis who either altogether rejected it and regarded it as a heresy or avoided it as much as possible. The Mu'tazilah, who advanced the doctrine of al-husn wa al-qubh al'aqliyyan, backed qiyas and ra'y in their fight against the Ahl al-Hadith who rejected it. The Ahl al-Hadith, who later came to be called Asha'irah due to their approach in kalam, rejected the doctrine of al-husn wa al-qubh al-'aqliyyan, claiming that the desirability or undesirability of things is derived from the commands and prohibitions of the lawgiver and not vice versa. As a result, they denied reason any role in legislation of Divine laws. The controversies between the Mu'tazilah and supporters of qiyas and ra'y on one side and the Asha'irah and the Ahl al-Hadith on the other side revolve around the role of reason and its share in legislation.

It must not be concluded from the above discussion that the Shi'ah opposition to ra'y and qiyas was also based on the same reasons as those of the Asha'irah and the Ahl al-Hadith, which was outright opposition to the role of reason in deduction of the laws of the Shari'ah. The Shi'i opposition to qiyas and ra'y had two reasons. The first was that the claim of the supporters of qiyas that the Book and the Sunnah are not adequate sources of legislation was not acceptable to the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). In the sermons of the Nahj al-balaghah and other Shi'i compilations of hadith the idea that the Book and the Sunnah are not adequate has been vehemently rejected. In the Usul al-Kafi, the chapter followed by another entitled:

The chapter about referring to the Book and the Sunnah, and that verily there is no haram or halal and nothing needed by the people that is not present in the Book or the Sunnah.

The second reason advanced by the Shi'ah against qiyas was that it was based on conjecture and led very frequently to error. These two reasons clearly stand out in the books of early Shi'ah scholars, and we shall abstain from further details for brevity's sake.

The best evidence of the fact that the Shi'ah opposition to qiyas and ra'y was not based on a hostility to the role of reason in canonical matters is that, from the very beginning that the Shiah jurisprudence was committed to writing, reason was considered one of the sources (adillah) of law. The Shi'ah jurisprudents stated that the sources of the Shari'ah are four: the Book, the Sunnah, ijma' and 'aql (reason), whereas the Zahiris and the Ahl al-Hadith confined the adillah to the Book, the Sunnah and ijma', and the support'ers of ra'y and qiyas regarded them as four: the Book, the Sunnah, ijma' and qiyas.

The Shi'ah jurisprudents, while opposing qiyas and ra'y, accepted the Mu'tazilah viewpoint about the rational basis of ethico-legal judgements, defended it and did not oppose it like the

Asha'irah and the Ahl al-Hadith. The concurrence of views between the Shi'ah and the Mu'tazilah regarding this doctrine and its corollaries - such as the doctrine of Divine justice - led the Shi'ah among the Mu'tazilah to be known as 'Adliyyah and the Shi'ah left behind the Mu'tazilah in their support of the doctrine of Divine justice. As a result, it came to be said in scholarly circles that: "justice and tawhid are 'Alawid and fatalism and anthropomorphism are Umayyad."

The reason for calling justice 'Alawid was that the supporters of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) were also defenders of the doctrine of al-husn wa al-qubh al-'aqliyyan and the doctrine of justice was a corollary to it. As to tawhid being 'Alawid, it was on account of the belief in the unity of Divine Essence and Attributes. The Umayyads supported jabr (fatalism) and tashbih (anthropomorphism) due to political exigencies. The issue of the independent capacity of reason to perceive the good and evil of things, and the subsidiary doctrine of justice, became so much a characteristic of the Shi'ah that justice came to be recognized as one of the principal tenets of the Shi'ite creed.

That the Shi'ite opposition to ra'y and qiyas is not to be taken to have been an opposition to the role of reason in ijtihad becomes completely obvious when we examine the extant documentary evidence. At the present the Shi'ah state the principle of the interrelation of Divine laws and actual benefits and harms and the principle of harmony between reason and religious law in these words:

> Whatever is the judgement of reason, is also the judgement of the Shari'ah.

This is an incontrovertible axiom of Shi'ite jurisprudence. The above discussion makes it clear that the Shi'ah Imamiyyah approach to ijtihad was an independent one: it was neither bound to ra'y and qiyas, nor did it impose any bounds on reason in the manner of the Ahl al-Hadith. The Imamiyyah jurists on the one hand recognized the rights of reason and regarded it as one of the sources of law, on the other hand they rejected qiyas and ijtihad bi al-ra'y in their books on jurisprudence, in chapters devoted to qiyas. However, it would have been in order if the latter scholars had followed the ancient ones in discussing qiyas and ra'y in their works. It would have helped to define the exact limits of the prohibited form of qiyas, which would have been better understood. This would have prevented some individuals from waging a battle against reason under the pretext of opposition to qiyas. In fact it would have been better for scholars to devote a separate chapter to reason and rational grounds in their works on jurisprudence, in which they could delineate more precisely the role of reason and also discuss, secondarily, the inadmissibility of qiyas. In view of this author, the absence of any discussion by the latter scholars about the inadmissible form of qiyas and the limits of the role of reason in legislation has been more or less detrimental to Shi'ah fiqh and ijtihad.

We should know that the great secret of Islam, from the viewpoint of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), is the principle that the general laws of the Book and the Sunnah are sufficient for

satisfying the religious needs of Muslims for all time, and that they have no need of ra'y and qiyas. It is characteristic of all Islamic laws that they are not only not hindersome to human progress in any era, but are conducive to it by guiding and directing it in the right direction. All that is needed to grasp this great secret is to have an enlightened and firm grasp of the vital issues. This great secret of the resourcefulness of Islam can also be called 'the great secret of ijtihad'. To be certain, if an independent chapter were devoted to the above topic in books on jurisprudence, some of the existing contradictions and constraints in the relationship between fiqh and progress would have been eliminated. This problem requires an independent study and here we shall abstain from going into further details.

In the course of history, those Sunni schools of fiqh which were more rigid and formalistic and allowed lesser role to reason in deduction of laws, either disappeared gradually or the number of their followers diminished. The Zahiris, who followed Dawud ibn 'Ali, became altogether extinct. The Hanbali school, which after the Zahiri is the most rigid and formalistic of Sunni schools, gradually lost followers, and had it not been for the appearance of Ibn Taymiyyah, who provided the material on which Wahhabism was later to thrive, perhaps today the number of followers of the Hanbali school would have been very small.

The school of Malik spread only in North Africa and Maghrib, away from the centres of Islamic culture, and, as Ibn Khaldun says, the cause of the spreading of the school of Malik in North Africa and Maghrib was that the inhabitants were Beduins who lived away from the centres of science and culture. In any case, the rigid and formalistic Sunni schools declined and lost followers with the passage of time.

Akhbarism in the Imamiyyah Tradition:

One of the most surprising as well as regrettable phenomena was the emergence of Akhbarism among the Shi'ah in the early eleventh/seventeenth century. Akhbarism was a hundred times more rigid and formalistic than either the Zahiri or the Hanbali school. Its emergence must be considered a great catastrophe in the Shi'ah world whose effects more or less survive to the present day, causing stagnation and obscurantism in the Shi'ah Muslim society.

The founder of Akhbarism was Mulla Amin Astarabadi, who expounded his beliefs in his famous book Fawa'id al-madaniyyah. Mulla Amin, as his book shows, was a brilliant and learned man. In general, those who found a school, no matter how baseless, rigid and false its teachings may be, are brilliant and intelligent men. A dullard cannot found a school and gather followers around himself. The dullards, however, are influenced by those brilliant individuals and become their loyal followers.

Amin Astarabadi claims to have discovered some truths which nobody before him had succeeded in knowing. Also, he claims a kind of Divine inspiration for himself; in the

introduction to the Fawa'id al- madaniyyah, he says:

> And you (i.e. the reader), after having gone through our book, will find in it truths untouched by any of the early or latter philosophers, legists, scholastics, and jurisprudents, and yet they are only a sample of what my Lord, the Almighty and the Supreme, has granted to me.

In this book he challenges even the philosophers and the mutakallimun, as occasionally he has to discuss some issues related to philosophy and kalam. In the book's tenth chapter, he discusses the meaning of nafs al-'amr. The eleventh chapter is named by him "Fi bayan aghlat al-'Asha'irah wa al-Mu'tazilah fi awwal al-wajibat" ("On the mistakes of the Ashai'rah and the Mu'tazilah about the first obligations"). In the twelfth, he cites the mistakes of Muslim philosophers and theologians.

Amin Astarabadi under different pretexts, tried to deny the legal authority (hujjiyyah) of three of the four well-known sources of law, that is, the Quran, ijma', and 'aql, thus recognizing only the Sunnah as the reliable source. As to the Quran, he claimed that no one has the right to refer directly to the Quran and to interpret it. Only the Infallible Imams have such a right. Our duty is to refer to their ahadith.Only those parts of the Quran that have been explained in hadith may be referred to for legal purposes; other parts whose exegesis does not exist in hadith may not be acted upon. Also in order to deny the authenticity of the text of the Quran, Amin Astarabadi raised the issue of its corruption (tahrif).

As to ijma', he denied its validity, considering it an innovation (bid'ah) of the Sunnis. He also offered many arguments to deny the authority of reason. On the contrary, with respect to ahadith he went to the other extreme and claimed that all the traditions, especially those of al-Kafi, Man la yahdruruhu al-faqih, al-Tahdhib and al-'Istibsar are of certain authenticity and legally binding. He ferociously attacked al- 'Allamah al-Hilli, who had classified traditions into sahih, muwaththaq, hasan, and da'if, and occasionally insults the 'Allamah and his followers in his book.

He categorically rejected the very principle of Ijtihad (even in its latter sense in which the Shi'ah fuqaha' had accepted it) and regarded it as an innovation in the faith. No one has any right to follow anyone except an infallible Imam, he claimed. He brought the entire force of his opposition to bear against reason and its authority. He claimed that all innovations involving reason - such as regarding Ijtihad as legitimate, considering the zawahir (apparent meanings of the Quranic verses) to be of binding authority, classifying ahadith into weak and strong, inquiring into the reliability of transmitters of ahadith and the like - came into vogue because the fuqaha' have followed the practitioners of qiyas, the scholastics, philosophers, and logicians to rely upon reason. Now, if Mulla Amin were to prove that reason is liable to error except in matters relating to objects of sense - experience or those which are derived from it (such as the concepts of mathematics), the fuqaha' would no longer go after Ijtihad

and reason. Accordingly, he advanced rather forceful arguments to disprove the authority of reason in matters which are not perceptual or derived from sense-experience. He is especially keen to prove that metaphysics and theology, since they are based on pure reasoning, are devoid of any value; hence the title of the twelfth chapter of the Fawa'id al-madaniyyah:

> On part of the errors of philosophers and Muslim theosophers (hukama') in their sciences and that their cause-as we have proved earlier-is that no one who deals with the issues whose preliminaries are extra-sensible is secure from error except the Infallible Ones (the Prophet [S], Fatimah [A], and the twelve Imams [A]).

There, he discusses some well-known problems of philosophy, such as the necessity of an intervening rest between two reciprocating straight line motions, that something which is necessarily associated with some impossibility is also impossible, the problem of precedence, and the problem of the preponderance of will.

On the whole, he is of the opinion that reason can be a guide only in the study of problems related to the natural sciences, which are based upon sense-experience, and in that of mathematics, whose concepts are derived from such experience or are closely related to it, but not in problems of theology and metaphysics. This view agrees totally with the outlook of the European empiricists of the sixteenth century. Incidentally, the period in which Astarabadi lived approximately coincides with that of the emergence of empiricism in Europe. It is not known whether his views were original or he had borrowed them. All that we know about him at the present is that he lived in Makkah for nearly ten years where he studied under Muhammad Astarabadi, to whom he refers as a faqih, a mutakallim, and philosopher. After that he had spent several years at al-Madinah. But we know nothing about how he came to adopt those views, whether he had innovated them or had borrowed them from someone else ...

Amin Astarabadi himself, and his followers as well, do not consider him as the founder of a new school called Akhbarism. Rather they consider him a revivalist who restored the way of the early Shi'ah scholars of hadith. They claim that their way is the same as that of the early Shi'ah that was followed until the times of al-Shaykh al-Saduq and from which the people were gradually led astray by such scholars as Ibn Abi 'Aqil, Ibn Junayd, al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Sayyid al-Murtada, and al-Shaykh al-Tusi, who brought in reason and ijtihad to temper with Divine commands. Shaykh Yusuf ibn Ahmad al-Bahram (d. 1186/1772), the author of al-Hada'iq al-nadrah, who was himself a moderate Akhbari, in the tenth muqaddimah of al-Hada'iq al-nadrah, under a heading style "Fi hujjiyyat al-dafiil al-'aqli" (On the legal validity of rational grounds), cites the following words of Sayyid Ni'mat Allah al-Jaza'iri from the latter's work Anwar al-nu'maniyyah:

> To be certain, a majority of our companions (i.e. the Shi'ah) followed a group

> of our opponents, among them philosophers. naturalists, or Ahl al-Ra'y and others, who, relying upon reason and its arguments. cast away the teachings of the prophets when they did not agree with their intellects.

In these words, which hint at excommunication, Sayyid Ni'mat Allah al-Jaza'iri considers the majority of Shi'ah scholars - and along with them the philosophers, the naturalists, and those who follow ra'y and qiyas to be heedless of the teachings of prophets, merely on the ground that they recognize the authority of reason. By the 'majority' he means all the scholars who came after al-Shaykh al-Saduq, as if until that time all Shi'ah had been Akhbaris.

In fact Akhbarism had never existed before as a school with distinct doctrines such as those based on the denial of the authority of the zawahir of the Quran, the denial of the authority of reason, impermissibility of the taqlid of anyone except the Ma'sum and so on. It is true that there were some who seldom went beyond quoting traditions in their books - even quoting them verbatim in their fatawa. But the fact is that the abundance of ahadith on the one hand, and the accessibility to the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) on the other, had been the major cause that the need for ijtihad and the need to deduce particular rules from general laws had not yet been felt.

Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, in the introduction to al-Mabsut, says: "I had heard from the 'Ammah (i.e. the Sunnis) the criticism that our fiqh is limited because we do not practise qiyas and ra'y and is therefore also inadequate for answering all the problems. For years I had been desirous of writing a.work on legal deduction without having recourse to qiyas and ra'y, deducing in it particular rules (furu') from the fundamental general principles (usul) that we have been taught in traditions. However, various preoccupations and hindrances prevented it." Then he adds:

> My determination was weakened further by the absence of any desire on the part of this sect (i.e. the Imamiyyah) towards it and their indifference in this regard; because they have compiled the traditions which they relate with their familiar vocabulary, to the extent that if in a problem different words to which they are not used to are employed to convey the same sense, they consider it as an odd thing.

Al-Tusi makes it clear that the biggest impediment in his writing of such a book was that it was not yet customary among the Shi'ah to practise ijtihad and to deduce particulars from universals.

As said before, there had not emerged any great jurist until that time who could officially practise ijtihad and deduce particular rules from the general principles. There had been some - such as al-Shaykh al-Saduq, Ibn al-Walid, and others - whose method was based on narration of traditions, not on a discursive study of the subject. Even if they wrote any book on kalam,

their argument consisted mainly of traditions. It was they whom al-Shaykh al-Tusi calls 'muqallidah' (imitators) and criticizes them. Al-Sayyid al-Murtada - as quoted in the introduction to al-Sara'ir by Ibn Idris - refers to them as ashasb al-hadith min ashabina (the 'ahl al-hadith' from among our companions), and al-'Allamah al- Hilli, in Tahdhib al-'usul, calls them 'al-'akhbariyyun min ashabina' (the 'akhbaris'-traditionists-from among our companions).

Perhaps it is on this account that al-Shahristani, in al-Milal wa al- nihal,divides the Imamiyyah into the subsects of mu'tazilah and akhbaris. In the first volume of his work, he says:

> When there came to be divergence in the traditions narrated from their Imams, as time passed every group of them took its own way, and some of the Imamiyyah became either Mu'tazilah, or Waidiyyah, or Tafdiliyyah, or Akhbariyyah, or Mushabbihah, or Salafiyyah.

However, it is quite certain and definite that in the early era there was no school opposed to that of ijtihad and legal deduction amongst the Shi'ah to have challenged the authority of the zawahir of the Quran or the authority of reason in order to defend hadith.

The appearance of Akhbarism, as I have said before, was a catastrophe for the scientific and intellectual life of the Shi'ah. Many individuals came to adopt its teachings and came to look down upon reason and rationalism. They made reflection upon the Quran a taboo and, instead of making the Quran the criterion for the acceptability of hadith, made hadith a criterion for the Quran. Fortunately there emerged eminent personalities among the mujtahidun and usulis who fought the influence of the Akhbaris. Among them the names of Wahid Behbahani and Shaykh Murtada al-'Ansari - may God elevate their station - stand high. To describe in detail the services of these two personages is beyond the scope of the present study.

By the way, it should not remain unsaid that the struggle against Akhbarism was a difficult and complex matter because its teachings took a deceptive and self-righteous stance which misled the public. It was for this reason that they rapidly gained influence and popularity after Amin Astarabadi ...

As is known, there broke out severe and bloody conflict towards the end of the second/eighth century and the beginning of the third/ninth between the Ahl al-Hadith wa al-Sunnah, who resemble the Shi'ah Akhbaris, and the Mu'tazilah, who believe in the role of reason and the validity of rational arguments. Al-Ma'mun (r. 198-218/813- 833), who was personally a man of learning, supported the Mu'tazilah and backed them in the controversy about the createdness of the Quran. He sent out a circular declaring those who denied the creaturehood of the Quran as heretics, who had no right to be judges and preside over the courts of law nor was their testimony to be accepted in the courts. As a result the Mu'tazilah attained great

power during al-Ma'mun's reign. More philosophical works than at any other time were translated into Arabic during al-Ma'mun's reign and rationalism became prevalent When al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/846-861) came to power, he reversed the tide by throwing the weight of his support behind the Ahl al-Hadith. The Mu'tazilah were proscribed and the publication of philosophy was banned. Al-Mas'udi, in Muruj al-dhahab, writes:

> When the caliphate fell to al-Mutawakkil, he ordered the people to abstain from discussion and debate and whatever they were used to in the days of al-Mu'tasim and al-Wathiq. He directed them to adopt compliance and imitation.

Al-Mutawakkil's support for the Ahl al-Hadith wa al-Sunnah - who like the Shi'ah Akhbaris had a deceptively self-righteous stance, spoke untiringly of submission and devotion and persistently chanted the phrase qala Rasul Allah ('so said the Apostle of Allah') - had an extraordinary effect on the people, to whom it appeared to be a defence of the Prophet. For this reason, al-Mutawakkil, despite his tyranny and debauchery, came to assume saintly image in the popular mind.

The Mu'tazilah could never recover from that blow. And we, the Shi'ah, should thank God that there arose no Mutawakkil in the era of the emergence of the Shi'ah Akhbaris, who were a hundred times more obscurantists and formalistic than the Ahl al-Hadith wa al-Sunnah, in their defence.

However, we should note the point that even though the Akhbari onslaught was defeated through the courageous resistance of a number of the followers of the school of ijtihad, but the Akhbari thinking was not completely destroyed. Whenever the champions of ijtihad have made any headway and wherever they have put their feet, Akhbari thinking had to recede and disappear. But Akhbari obscurantism still rules in those places where they were not able to reach.

How often we come across mujtahids who do ijtihad with an Akhbari brain. Many of the kind of things which are published in the name of the 'teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt' and come to the market, but which strike dagger into the back of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (S), are no more than the remnants of the thought of Mulla Muhammad Amin Astarabadi.

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An Introduction to 'Ilm al-Kalam

Martyr Murtada Mutahhari

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This long article is a part of Martyr Murtada Mutahhari's book Ashna'i ba 'ulum-e Islami (An Introduction to the Islamic Sciences). The book consists of seven parts: (1) logic (2) philosophy (3) al-kalam (Muslim scholastic philosophy) (4) 'irfan (Islamic mysticism) (5) usul-e fiqh (the principles of jurisprudence) (6) fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) (7) hikmat-e 'amali' (practical philosophy or practical morality). All the seven parts together serve both as a comprehensive survey of the fundamentals of different branches of Islamic sciences and a general and comprehensive perspective for the proper understanding of the basic teachings of Islam along with the main points of difference among various sects of Muslims. This work of Martyr Mutahhari is the best introduction to Islamic philosophy and jurisprudence. From this view, Ashna'i ba 'ulum-e Islami deserves to be prescribed as the basic text for all the students of Islamic studies. It is also very useful for non-specialists who wish to acquaint themselves with Islam. All the introductory books written so far are either by the Orientalists and are naturally biased and fail to give true picture of the development of different Islamic sciences or are written by Muslim scholars who consciously or unknowingly incorporate in the body of books certain misleading notions propagated by the Western scholars of Islam about Muslirn philosophy and its various branches. It also can be said with some justification that no other available introductory text in this field covers all Muslim sects and their specific views. Martyr Murtada Mutahhari's exposition and evaluation of various theories is objective and unbiased, which is the most essential condition for a book to be prescribed as an introductory text.

In this part, dealing with 'ilm al-kalam, the author has discussed the main doctrines of kalam and their subsequent modifications with special reference to Mu'tazilah, Asha'irah and Shi'ah schools of kalam. But he has not ignored other schools and has referred to their relevant doctrines wherever it was necessary for the full understanding of the problem under discussion.]

'Ilm al-kalam is one of the Islamic sciences. It discusses the fundamental Islamic beliefs and doctrines which are necessary for a Muslim to believe in. It explains them, argues about them, and defends them.

The scholars of Islam divide Islamic teachings into three parts:

(i) Doctrines ('aqa'id): These constitute the issues which must be understood and believed in, such as, the Unity of God, the Divine Attributes, universal and restricted prophethood, etc. However, there are certain differences between Muslim sects as to what constitutes the basic articles of faith (usul al-Din) in which belief is necessary.

(ii) Morals (akhlaq): These relate to the commands and teachings relating to the spiritual and moral characteristics of human beings, such as, justice, God-fearing (taqwa), courage, chastity, wisdom, endurance, loyalty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, etc., and prescribe 'how' a human being should be.

(iii) The Law (ahkam): Here the issues relating to practice and the correct manner of performing acts, such as, prayers (salat), fasting (sawm), hajj, jihad, al- 'amr bil ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar, buying, renting, marriage, divorce, division of inheritance and so on, are discussed.

The science which deals with the first of the above-mentioned is 'ilm al-kalam. The study of the second is 'ilm al-'akhlaq (ethics). The study of the third is called 'ilm al-fiqh (the science of jurisprudence). That which is subjected to division in this classification is the corpus of Islamic teachings; that is, those things which constitute the content of Islam. It does not include all those Islamic studies which form the preliminaries for the study of Islamic teachings, such as, literature, logic, and occasionally philosophy.

Secondly, in this classification the criterion behind division is the relationship of Islamic teachings to the human being: those things which relate to human reason and intellect are called 'aqa'id; things which relate to human qualities are called akhlaq; and those things which relate to human action and practice are included in fiqh.

As I shall discuss in my lectures on 'ilm al-fiqh, although fiqh is a single discipline from the viewpoint of its subject, it consists of numerous disciplines from other viewpoints.

In any case, 'ilm al-kalam is the study of Islamic doctrines and beliefs. in the past, it was also called "usul al-Din" or "'Ilm al-tawhid wa al-sifat".

The Beginnings of Kalam:

Though nothing definite can be said about the beginnings of 'ilm al-kalam among Muslims, what is certain is that discussion of some of the problems of kalam, such as the issue of predestination (jabr) and free will (ikhtiyar), and that of Divine Justice, became current among Muslims during the first half of the second century of Hijrah. Perhaps the first formal centre of such discussions was the circle of al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728-29). Among the Muslim personalities of the latter half of the first century, the names of Ma'bad al-Juhani (d. 80/ 699) and Ghaylan ibn Muslim al-Dimashqi (d. 105/723) have been mentioned, who adamantly defended the ideas of free will (ikhtiyar) and man's freedom. There were others who opposed them and supported predestination (jabr). The believers in free will were called "qadariyyah" and their opponents were known as "jabriyyah".

Gradually the points of difference between the two groups extended to a series of other issues in theology, physics, sociology and other problems relating to man and the Resurrection, of which the problem of jabr and ikhtiyar was only one. During this period, the "qadariyyah" came to be called "Mu'tazilah" and the "jabriyyah" became known as "Asha'irah ". The Orientalists and their followers insist on considering the beginnings of discursive discussions in the Islamic world from this point or its like.

However, the truth is that rational argumentation about Islamic doctrines starts with the Holy Qur'an itself, and has been followed up in the utterances of the Holy Prophet (S) and especially in the sermons of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A). This despite the fact that their style and approach are different from those of the Muslim mutakallimun. [1]

Inquiry or Imitation?

The Holy Qur'an has laid the foundation of faith and belief on thought and reasoning. Throughout, the Qur'an insists that men should attain faith through the agency of thought. In the view of the Qur'an, intellectual servitude is not sufficient for believing and understanding its basic doctrines. Accordingly, one should take up a rational inquiry of the basic principles and doctrines of the faith. For example, the belief that God is One, should be arrived at rationally. The same is true of the prophethood of Muhammad (S). This requirement resulted in the establishment of 'ilm al-'usul during the first century.

There were many reasons which led to the unprecedented realization of the necessity for the study of the fundamentals of the Islamic faith amongst Muslims and the task of defending them, a realization which led to the emergence of prominent mutakallimun during the second, third, and fourth centuries. These were: embracing of Islam by various nations who brought with them a series of (alien) ideas and notions; mixing and coexistence of the Muslims with people of various religions, such as, the Jews, the Christians, the Magians, and the Sabaeans, and the ensuing religious debates and disputes between the Muslims and those peoples; the emergence of the Zanadiqah [2] in the Islamic world - who were totally against religion - as a result of the general freedom during the rule of the 'Abbasid Caliphs (as long as it did not

interfere in the matters of state politics); the birth of philosophy in the Muslim world - which by itself gave birth to doubts and skeptical attitudes.

The First Problem:

Apparently, the first problem which was discussed and debated by the Muslims was that of predestination and free will. This was very natural, since it is a primary problem linked with human destiny and which attracts the interest of every thinking adult. Perhaps it is not possible to find a society which has reached intellectual maturity in which this problem was not raised. Secondly, the Holy Qur'an has a large number of verses on this subject, which instigate thought in regard to this problem. [3]

Accordingly, there is no reason to try to seek another source for the origin of this problem in the Islamic world.

The Orientalists, habitually, make an effort, in order to negate the originality of the Islamic teachings, to trace the roots, at any cost, of all sciences that originated amongst Muslims to the world outside the domains of Islam, in particular the Christian world. Therefore, they insist that the roots of 'ilm al-kalam should be acknowledged to lie outside Islam, and they make similar attempts with regard to the study of grammar, prosody (and perhaps semantics, rhetoric, and studies of literary and poetic devices), and Islamic 'irfan.

The problem of determinism and free will (jabr wa ikhtiyar) is the same as the problem of predestination and Divine Providence qada' wa qadar, the first formulation relates to man and his free will, while the second one relates to God. This problem also raises the issue of Divine Justice, because there is an explicit connection between determinism and injustice on the one hand, and free will and justice on the other.

The problem of justice raises the issue of the essential good and evil of actions, and the latter in its turn brings along with it the problem of the validity of reason and purely rational judgements. These problems together lead to the discussion of Divine wisdom (that is the notion that there is a judicious purpose and aim behind Divine Acts) [4], and thereby, gradually, to the debate about the unity of Divine Acts and the unity of the Attributes, as we shall explain later.

The formation of opposite camps in the debates of kalam, later acquired a great scope, and extended to many philosophical problems, such as, substance and accident, nature of indivisible particles which constitute physical bodies, the problem of space, etc. This was because, in the view of the mutakallimun, discussion of such issues was considered a prelude to the debate about theological matters, particularly those related with mabda' (primeval origin) and ma'ad (resurrection). In this way many of the problems of philosophy entered 'ilm al-kalam, and now there are many problems common to both.

If one were to study the books on kalam, specially those written after the 7th/l3th century, one would see that most of them deal with the same problems as those discussed by philosophers - especially, Muslim philosophers - in their books.

Islamic philosophy and kalam have greatly influenced each other. One of the results was that kalam raised new problems for philosophy, and philosophy helped in widening the scope of kalam, in the sense that dealing with many philosophical problems came to be considered necessary in kalam. With God's help, we hope to give an example of each of these two results of reciprocal influence between philosophy and kalam.

Al-Kalam al-'Aqli and al-Kalam al-Naqli:

Although 'ilm al-kalam is a rational and discursive discipline, it consists of two parts from the viewpoint of the preliminaries and fundamentals used by it in arguments:

(i) 'aqli (rational);

(ii) naqli (transmitted, traditional).

The 'aqli part of kalam consists of the material which is purely rational, and if there is any reference to naqli (tradition), it is for the sake of illumination and confirmation of a rational judgement. But in problems such as those related to Divine Unity, prophethood, and some issues of Resurrection, reference to naql - the Book and the Prophet's Sunnah - is not sufficient; the argument must be purely rational.

The naqli part of kalam, although it consists of issues related with the doctrines of the faith - and it is necessary to believe in them - but since these issues are subordinate to the issue of prophethood, it is enough to quote evidence from the Divine Revelation or the definite ahadith of the Prophet (S), e.g. in issues linked with imamah (of course, in the Shi'ite faith, wherein belief in imamah is considered a part of usul al-Din), and most of the issues related with the Resurrection.

DEFINITION AND SUBJECT MATTER OF 'ILM AL-KALAM:

For a definition of 'ilm al-kalam, it is sufficient to say that, 'It is a science which studies the basic doctrines of the Islamic faith (usul al-Din). It identifies the basic doctrines and seeks to prove their validity and answers any doubts which may be cast upon them.'

In texts on logic and philosophy it is mentioned that every science has a special subject of its own, and that the various sciences are distinguished from one another due to their separate

subject matter. This is certainly true, and those sciences whose subject matter has a real unity are such. However, there is nothing wrong if we form a discipline whose unity of subject matter and the problems covered by it is an arbitrary and conventional one, in the sense that it covers diverse, mutually exclusive subjects, which are given an arbitrary unity because they serve a single purpose and objective. In sciences whose subject has an essential unity, there is no possibility of overlapping of problems. But in sciences in which there is a conventional unity among the issues dealt with, there is nothing wrong if there is an overlapping of issues. The commonness of the problems between philosophy and kalam, psychology and kalam, or sociology and kalam, is due to this reason.

Some Islamic scholars have sought to define and outline the subject matter of 'ilm al-kalam, and have expressed various opinions. But this is a mistake; because a clear-cut delineation of the subject of study is possible for only those sciences which have an essential unity among the problems dealt with. But in those sciences in which there is a conventional unity of problems dealt with, there can be no unity of subject. Here we cannot discuss this issue further.

The Name "'Ilm al-Kalam":

Another point is why this discipline has been called " 'ilm al-kalam", and when this name was given to it. Some have said that it was called "kalam" (lit. speech) because it gives an added power of speech and argument to one who is well-versed in it. Some say that the reason lies in the habit of the experts of this science who began their own statements in their books with the expression "al-kalamu fi kadha". Others explain that it was called "kalam" because it discussed issues regarding which the Ahl al-Hadith preferred to maintain complete silence. Yet according to others this name came to be in vogue when the issue whether the Holy Qur'an (called "kalamullahi") ,the Divine Utterance [5], i.e. the Holy Qur'an) is created (makhluq) or not, became a matter for hot debate amongst the Muslim - a controversy which led to animosity between the two opposite camps and bloodshed of many. This is also the reason why that period is remembered as a "time of severe hardship" - mihnah. That is, since most of the debates about the doctrines of the faith revolved around the huduth (createdness, temporality) or the qidam (pre-eternity) of the "Utterance" or kalam of God, this discipline which discussed the principal doctrines of the faith came to be called " 'ilm al-kalam" (lit. the science of the Utterance). These are the various opinions that have been expressed about the reason why 'ilm al-kalam was given this name.

The Various Schools of Kalam:

The Muslims differed with one another in matters of the Law (fiqh), following differing paths and dividing into various sects, such as Ja'fari, Zaydi, Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali, each of which has a fiqh of its own. Similarly, from the viewpoint of the doctrine, they divided into various schools, each with its own set of principal doctrines. The most important

of these schools are: the Shi'ah, the Mu'tazilah, the 'Asha'irah, and the Murji'ah.

Here it is possible that the question may arise as to the reason behind such regretful division of the Muslims into sects in matters dealing with kalam and fiqh, and why they could not maintain their unity in these spheres. The difference in matters of kalam causes disunity in their Islamic outlook, and the disagreement in the matter of fiqh deprives them of the unity of action.

Both this question and the regret are justified. But it is necessary to pay attention to the two following points:

(i) The disagreement in issues of fiqh among the Muslims is not so great as to shatter the foundations of the unity of doctrinal outlook and mode of practice. There is so much common in their doctrinal and practical matters that the points of difference can hardly inflict any serious blow.

(ii) Theoretical differences and divergence of views is inevitable in societies in spite of their unity and agreement in principles, and as long as the roots of the differences lie in methods of inference, and not in vested interests, they are even beneficial; because they cause mobility, dynamism, discussion, curiosity, and progress. Only when the differences are accompanied by prejudices and emotional and illogical alignments, and lead individuals to slander, defame, and treat one another with contempt, instead of motivating them to endeavour towards reforming themselves, that they are a cause of misfortune.

In the Shi'ite faith, the people are obliged to imitate a living mujtahid, and the mujtahidun are obliged to independently ponder the issues and form their independent opinions and not to be content with what has been handed down by the ancestors. Ijtihad and independence of thought inherently lead to difference of views; but this divergence of opinions has given life and dynamism to the Shi'ite fiqh. Therefore, difference in itself cannot be condemned. What is condemnable is the difference which originates in evil intentions and selfish interests, or when it centres around issues which drive Muslims on separate paths, such as the issue of imamah and leadership, not the difference in secondary and non-basic matters.

To undertake an examination of the intellectual history of the Muslims so as to find which differences originated in evil intentions, vested interests, and prejudices, and which were a natural product of their intellectual life, whether all points of difference in the sphere of kalam should be regarded as fundamental, or whether all problems in fiqh should be regarded as secondary, or if it is possible that a difference in kalam may not be of fundamental significance whereas one in fiqh may have such importance - these are questions which lie outside the brief scope of this lecture.

Before we take up the schools of kalam for discussion, it is essential to point out that there has

been a group of scholars in the Islamic world which was basically opposed to the very idea of 'ilm al-kalam and rational debate about Islamic doctrines, considering it a taboo and an innovation in the faith (bid'ah). They are known as "Ahl al-Hadith." Ahmad ibn Hanbal, one of the imams of jurisprudence of the Ahl al-Sunnah, stands foremost among them.

The Hanbalis are totally against kalam, Mu'tazilite or Ash'arite, not to speak of the Shi'ite kalam. In fact they are basically opposed to logic and philosophy. Ibn Taymiyyah, who was one of the eminent scholars of the Sunni world, gave a verdict declaring kalam and logic as 'unlawful'. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, another figure among the Ahl al-Hadith, has written a book called Sawn al-mantiq wa al-kalam 'an al-mantiq wa al-kalam ("Protecting speech and logic from [the evil of] 'ilm al-kalam and the science of logic").

Malik ibn Anas is another Sunni imam who considers any debate or inquiry about doctrinal matters to be unlawful. We have explained the Shi'ite viewpoint in this matter, in the introduction to Vol.V of Usul-e falsafeh wa rawish-e riyalism. [6]

The important schools of kalam, as mentioned earlier, are: Shi'ah, Mu'tazilah, Asha'irah, and Murji'ah. Some sects of the Khawarij and the Batinis, such as the Isma'ilis, have also been considered as schools of Islamic kalam. [7]

However, in my view, none of these two sects can be considered as belonging to the schools of Islamic kalam. The Khawarij, although they held specific beliefs in the matters of doctrine, and perhaps were the first to raise doctrinal problems by expressing certain beliefs about Imamah, the kufr (apostasy) of the fasiq (evil-doer, one who commits major sins), and considered the disbelievers in these beliefs as apostates, but they did not, firstly, create a rationalist school of thought in the Muslim world, and, secondly, their thinking was so much deviated - from the viewpoint of the Shi'ites - that it is difficult to count them among Muslims. What makes things easy is that the Khawarij ultimately became extinct and only one of their sects, called "Abadiyyah" has some followers today. The Abadiyyah were the most moderate of all the Khawarij, and that is the reason why they have survived until today.

The Batinis, too, have so much liberally interfered in Islamic ideas on the basis of esotericism that it is possible to say that they have twisted Islam out of its shape, and that is the reason why the Muslim world is not ready to consider them as one of the sects of Islam.

About thirty years ago when the Dar al-Taqrib Bayna al-Madhahib al-'Islamiyyah was established in Cairo, the Imamiyyah Shi'ah, the Zaydiyyah, the Hanafi, the Shafi'i, the Maliki and the Hanbali sects, each of them had a representative. The Isma'ilis tried hard to send a representative of their own; but it was not accepted by other Muslims. Contrary to the Khawarij, who did not create a system of thought, the Batinis, despite their serious deviations, do have a significant school of kalam and philosophy. There have emerged among them important thinkers who have left behind a considerable number of works. Lately, the

Orientalists have been showering great attention on the Batini thought and works.

One of the prominent Isma'ili figures is Nasir Khusrow al-'Alawi (d. 841/1437-38), the well-known Persian poet and the author of such famous works as Jami' al-hikmatayn, Kitab wajh al-Din, and Khuwan al-'ikwan. Another is Abu Hatam al-Razi (d. 332/943-44), the author of A'lam al-nubuwwah. Others are: Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, the author of Kashf al-mahjub (its Persian translation has been recently published), who died during the second half of the 4th/l0th century; Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, a pupil of Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, has written a large number of books about the Isma'ili faith; Abu Hanifah Nu'man ibn Thabit, well-known as Qadi Nu'man or "the Shi'ite Abu Hanifah" (i.e. Isma'ili); his knowledge of fiqh and hadith is good, and his well-known book Da'a'im al-'Islam has been printed by lithotype several years ago.

MU'TAZILAH:

We shall begin our discussion - and we shall explain later why - with the Mu'tazilah. The emergence of this sect took place during the latter part of the first century or at the beginning of the second. Obviously 'ilm al-kalam, like any other field of study, developed gradually and slowly attained maturity.

First we shall enumerate the principal Mu'tazilite beliefs, or what is better to say, the basic and salient points of their school of thought. Second, we shall point out the well-known Mu'tazilite figures and speak of their fate in history. Then we shall give an account of the main outlines of the transitions and changes in their thought and beliefs.

The opinions held by the Mu'tazilah are many, and are not confined to the religious matters, or which according to them form an essential part of the faith. They cover a number of physical, social, anthropological and philosophical issues, which are not directly related with the faith. However, there is a certain relevance of these problems to religion, and, in the belief of the Mu'tazilah, any inquiry about the matters of religion is not possible without studying them.

There are five principal doctrines which, according to the Mu'tazilah themselves, constitute their basic tenets:

(i) Tawhid, i.e. absence of plurality and attributes.

(ii) Justice ('adl), i.e. God is just and that He does not oppress His creatures.

(iii) Divine retribution (at-wa'd wa al-wa'id), i.e. God has determined a reward for the obedient and a punishment for the disobedient, and there can be no uncertainty about it. Therefore, Divine pardon is only possible if the sinner repents, for forgiveness without

repentance (tawbah) is not possible.

(iv) Manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn (a position between the two positions). This means that a fasiq (i.e. one who commits one of the "greater sins," such as a wine imbiber, adulterer, or a liar etc.) is neither a believer (mu'min) nor an infidel (kafir); fisq is an intermediary state between belief and infidelity.

(v) al-'amr bil ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar [bidding to do what is right and lawful, and forbidding what is wrong and unlawful]. The opinion of the Mu'tazilah about this Islamic duty is, firstly, that the Shari'ah is not the exclusive means of identifying the ma'ruf and the munkar; human reason can, at least partially, independently identify the various kinds of ma'ruf and munkar. Secondly, the implementation of this duty does not necessitate the presence of the Imam, and is a universal obligation of all Muslims, whether the Imam or leader is present or not. Only some categories of it are the obligation of the Imam or ruler of Muslims, such as, implementation of the punishments (hudud) prescribed by the Shari'ah, guarding of the frontiers of Islamic countries, and other such matters relating to the Islamic government.

Occasionally, the Mu'tazilite mutakallmun have devoted independent volumes to discussion of their five doctrines, such as the famous al-'Usul al-khamsah of al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar al-'Astarabadi (d. 415/ 1025), a Mu'tazilite contemporary of al-Sayyid al-Murtada 'Alam al-Huda and al-Sahib ibn 'Abbad (d. 100%/995).

As can be noticed, only the principles of tawhid and Justice can be considered as parts of the essential doctrine. The other three principles are only significant because they characterize the Mu'tazilah. Even Divine Justice - although its notion is definitely supported by the Qur'an, and belief in it is a necessary part of the Islamic faith and doctrine - has been made one of the five major doctrines because it characterizes the Mu'tazilah. Or otherwise belief in Divine Knowledge and Power is as much an essential part of the Islamic faith and principal doctrine.

Also in the Shi'ite faith the principle of Divine Justice is considered one of the five essential doctrines. It is natural that the question should arise: what is particular about Divine Justice that it should be counted.among the essential doctrines, though justice is only one of the Divine Attributes? Is not God Just in the same manner as He is the Omniscient, the Mighty, the Living, the Perceiver, the Hearer and the Seer? All those Divine Attributes are essential to the faith. Then why justice is given so much prominence among the Divine Attributes?

The answer is that Justice has no advantage over other Attributes. The Shi'ite mutakallimun have specially mentioned justice among the principal Shi'ite doctrines because the Ash'arites - who form the majority of the Ahl al-Sunnah - implicitly deny that it is an Attribute, whereas they do not reject the Attributes of Knowledge, Life, Will, etc. Accordingly, justice is counted among the specific doctrines of the Shi'ah, as also of the Mu'tazilah. The above-mentioned

five doctrines constitute the basic position of the Mu'tazilah from the viewpoint of kalam, otherwise, as said before, the Mu'tazilite beliefs are not confined to these five and cover a broad scope ranging from theology, physics and sociology to anthropology, in all of which they hold specific beliefs, a discussion of which lies outside the scope of these lectures.

The Doctrine of al-Tawhid:

Beginning with tawhid it has various kinds and levels: al-tawhid al-dhati (Unity of the Essence), al-tawhid al-sifati (Unity of the Attributes, i.e., with the Essence), al-tawhid al-'af'ali (Unity of the Acts), al-tawhid al-'ibadi (monotheism in worship).

Al-Tawhid al-dhati: It means that the Divine Essence is one and unique; it does not have a like or match. All other beings are God's creations and inferior to Him in station and in degree of perfection. In fact, they cannot be compared with Him. The idea of al-tawhid al-dhati is made clear by the following two [Qur'anic] verses:

> Nothing is like Him. (42:11)

> He does not have a match [whatsoever]. (112:4)

AI-Tawhid al-sifati: It means that the Divine Attributes such as Knowledge, Power, Life, Will, Perception, Hearing, Vision, etc. are not realities separate from God's Essence. They are identical with the Essence, in the sense that the Divine Essence is such that the Attributes are true of It, or is such that It manifests these Attributes.

Al-Tawhid al-'af'ali: It means that all beings, or rather all acts [even human acts] exist by the Will of God, and are in some way willed by His sacred Essence.

Al-Tawhid al-'ibadi: It means that except God no other being deserves worship and devotion. Worship of anything besides God is shirk and puts the worshipper outside the limits of Islamic tawhid or monotheism.

In a sense al-tawhid al-'ibadi (tawhid in worship) is different from other kinds of tawhidi, because the first three relate to God and this kind relates to the creatures. In other words, the Unity of Divine Essence, His Uniqueness and the identity of the Essence and Attributes, the unity of the origin of everything - all of them are matters which relate to God. But tawhid in worship, i.e. the necessity of worshipping the One God, relates to the behaviour of the creatures. But in reality, tawhid in worship is also related to God, because it means Uniqueness of God as the only deserving object of worship, and that He is in truth the One Deity Worthy of Worship. The statement "la ilaha illallah" encompasses all aspects of tawhid,

although its first signification is monotheism in worship.

Al-tawhid al-dhati and al-tawhid al-'ibadi are part of the basic doctrines of Islam. It means that if there is a shortcoming in one's belief in these two principles, it would put one outside the pale of Islam. No Muslim has opposed these two basic beliefs.

Lately, the Wahhabis, who are the followers of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, who was a follower of Ibn Taymiyyah, a Hanbali from Syria, have claimed that some common beliefs of the Muslims such as one in intercession (shafa'ah) and some of their practices such as invoking the assistance of the prophets (A) and holy saints (R) are opposed to the doctrine of al-tawhid al-'ibadi. But these are not considered by other Muslims to conflict with al-tawhid al-'ibadi. The point of difference between the Wahhabis and other Muslims is not whether any one besides God - such as the prophets or saints - is worthy of worship. There is no debate that anyone except God cannot be worshipped. The debate is about whether invoking of intercession and assistance can be considered a form of worship or not. Therefore, the difference is only secondary, not a primary one. Islamic scholars have rejected the viewpoint of the Wahhabis in elaborate, well-reasoned answers.

Al-tawhid al-sifati (the Unity of Divine Essence and Attributes) is a point of debate between the Mu'tazilah and the Asha'irah. The latter deny it while the former affirm it. Al-tawhid al-'af'ali is also another point of difference between them, with the difference, however, that the matter is reverse; i.e. the Asha'irah affirm it and the Mu'tazilah deny it.

When the Mu'tazilah call themselves "ahl al-tawhid", and count it among their doctrines, thereby they mean by it al-tawhid al-sifati, not al-tawhid al-dhati, nor al-tawhid al-'ibadi (which are not disputed), nor al-tawhid al-'af'ali. Because, firstly, al-tawhid al-'af'ali is negated by them, and, secondly, they expound their own viewpoint about it under the doctrine of justice, their second article.

The Asha'irah and the Mu'tazilah formed two radically opposed camps on the issues of al-tawhid al-sifati and al-tawhid al-'af'ali. To repeat, the Mu'tazilah affirm al-tawhid al-sifati and reject al-tawhid al-'af'ali, while the Ash'arite position is the reverse. Each of them have advanced arguments in support of their positions. We shall discuss the Shi'ite position regarding these two aspects of tawhid in the related chapter.

The Doctrine of Divine Justice:

In the preceding lecture I have mentioned the five fundamental Mu'tazilite principles, and explained the first issue, i.e. their doctrine of tawhid. Here we shall take up their doctrine of Divine Justice.

Of course, it is evident that none of the Islamic sects denied justice as one of the Divine

Attributes. No one has ever claimed that God is not just. The difference between the Mu'tazilah and their opponents is about the interpretation of Justice. The Asha'irah interpret it in such a way that it is equivalent, in the view of the Mu'tazilah, to a denial of the Attribute of Justice. Otherwise, the Asha'irah are not at all willing to be considered the opponents of justice.

The Mu'tazilah believe that some acts are essentially 'just' and some intrinsically 'unjust.' For instance, rewarding the obedient and punishing the sinners is justice; and that God is Just, i.e. He rewards the obedient and punishes the sinners, and it is impossible for Him to act otherwise. Rewarding the sinners and punishing the obedient is essentially and intrinsically unjust, and it is impossible for God to do such a thing. Similarly, compelling His creatures to commit sin, or creating them without any power of free will, then creating the sinful acts at their hands, and then punishing them on account of those sins - this is injustice, an ugly thing for God to do; it is unjustifiable and unGodly. But the Asha'irah believe that no act is intrinsically or essentially just or unjust. Justice is essentially whatever God does. If, supposedly, God were to punish the obedient and reward the sinners, it would be as just. Similarly, if God creates His creatures without any will, power or freedom of action, then if He causes them to commit sins and then punishes them for that - it is not essential injustice. If we suppose that God acts in this manner, it is justice:

> Whatever that Khusrow does is sweet (shirin).

For the same reason that the Mu'tazilah emphasize justice, they deny al-tawhid al-'af'ali. They say that al-tawhid al-'af'ali implies that God, not the human beings, is the maker of human deeds. Since it is known that man attains reward and punishment in the Hereafter, if God is the creator of human actions and yet punishes them for their evil deeds - which not they, but God Himself has brought about - that would be injustice (zulm) and contrary to Divine Justice. Accordingly, the Mu'tazilah consider al-tawhid al-'af'ali to be contrary to the doctrine of justice.

Also, thereby, the Mu'tazilah believe in human freedom and free will and are its staunch defenders, contrary to the Asha'irah who deny human freedom and free will.

Under the doctrine of justice - in the sense that some deeds are inherently just and some inherently unjust, and that human reason dictates that justice is good and must be practised, whereas injustice is evil and must be abstained from - they advance another general doctrine, which is more comprehensive, that is the principle that "beauty" (husn) and "ugliness" (qubh), (good and evil), are inherent properties of acts. For instance, truthfulness, trustworthiness, chastity and God-fearing are intrinsically good qualities, and falsehood, treachery, indecency, neglectfulness, etc. are intrinsically evil. Therefore, deeds in essence, before God may judge them, possess inherent goodness or evil (husn or qubh).

Hereupon, they arrive at another doctrine about reason: human reason can independently judge (or perceive) the good or evil in things. It means that the good or evil of some deeds can be judged by human reason independently of the commands of the Shari'ah. The Asha'irah are against this view too.

The belief in the inherent good or evil of acts and the capacity of reason to judge them, upheld by the Mu'tazilah and rejected by the Asha'irah, brought many other problems in its wake, some of which are related to theology, some to human predicament; such as, whether the Divine Acts, or rather, the creation of things is with a purpose or not. The Mu'tazilah claimed that absence of a purpose in the creation is "qabih" (an ugly thing) and so rationally impossible. How about a duty which is beyond one's power to fulfil? Is it possible that God may saddle someone with a duty which is over and above his capacity? The Mu'tazilah consideied this, too, as "qabih", and so impossible.

Is it within the power of a believer (mu'min) to turn apostate? Does the infidel (kafir) have any power over his own infidelity (kufr)? The answer of the Mu'tazilah is in the affirmative; for if the believer and the infidel had no power over their belief and infidelity, it would be wrong (qabih) to award and punish them. The Asha'irah rejected all these Mu'tazilite doctrines and held opposite views.

Retribution (al-wa'd wa al-wa'id):

"Wa'd" means promising award and "wa'id" means threat of punishment. The Mu'tazilah believe that God does not break His own promises (all Muslims unanimously accept this) or forego His threats, as stated by the Qur'anic verse regarding Divine promise:

> Indeed God does not break the promise. (13:31)

Accordingly (the Mu'tazilah say), all threats addressed to the sinners and the wicked such as the punishments declared for an oppressor, a liar or a wine imbiber, will all be carried out without fail, except when the sinner repents before death. Therefore, pardon without repentance is not possible.

From the viewpoint of the Mu'tazilah, pardon without repentance implies failure to carry out the threats (wa'id), and such an act, like breaking of promise (khulf al-wa'd),is "qabih", and so impossible. Thus the Mu'tazilite beliefs regarding Divine retribution and Divine forgiveness are interrelated, and both arise from their belief in inherent good and evil of deeds determinable by reason.

Manzilah Bayna al-Manzilatayn:

The Mu'tazilite belief in this matter emerged in the wake of two opposite beliefs in the Muslim world about the faith ('iman) or infidelity (kufr) of the fasiq. For the first time the Khawarij maintained that committing of any of the capital sins (kaba'ir) was contrary to faith ('iman) and equal to infidelity. Therefore, the perpetrator of a major sin is a kafir.

As we know, the Khawarij emerged after the incident of arbitration (tahkim) during the Battle of Siffin about the year 37/657-58 during the caliphate of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A). As the Nahj al-Balaghah tells us, Amir al-Mu'minin (A) argued with them on this issue and refuted their viewpoint by numerous arguments. The Khawarij, even after 'Ali (A), were against the caliphs of the period, and staunchly espoused the cause of al-'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar, denouncing others for their evil and calling them apostates and infidels. Since most of the caliphs indulged in the capital sins, they were naturally regarded as infidels by the Khawarij. Accordingly, they were adversaries of the current politics.

Another group which emerged (or was produced by the hands of vested political interests) was that of the Murji'ah, whose position with regard to the effect of capital sins was precisely opposite to that of the Khawarij. They held that faith and belief is a matter of the heart. One should remain a Muslim if one's faith - which is an inner affair of the heart - were intact, evil deeds cannot do any harm. Faith compensates all wickedness.

The opinions of the Murji'ah were to the benefit of the rulers, and tended to cause the people to regard their wickedness and indecencies as unimportant, or to consider them, despite their destructive character, as men worthy of paradise. The Murji'ah stated in unequivocal terms, "The respectability of the station of the ruler is secure, no matter how much he may sin. Obedience to him is obligatory and prayers performed in his leadership are correct." The tyrannical caliphs, therefore, backed them. For the Murji'ah, sin and wickedness, no matter how serious, do not harm one's faith; the perpetrator of the major sins is a mu'min, not a kafir.

The Mu'tazilah took a middle path in this matter. They maintained that the perpetrator of a major sin is neither a mu'min, nor he is a kafir, but occupies a position between those two extremes. This middle state was termed by the Mu'tazilah "manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn."

It is said that the first to express this belief was Wasil ibn 'Ata', a pupil of al-Hasan al-Basri. One day Wasil was sitting with his teacher, who was asked his opinion about the difference between the Khawarij and the Murji'ah on this issue. Before al-Hasan could say anything, Wasil declared: "In my opinion the perpetrator of the major sins is a fasiq, not a kafir." After this, he left the company, or as is also said, was expelled by al-Hasan al-Basri - and parting his way started propagating his own views. His pupil and brother-in-law 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd also joined him. At this point Hasan declared, "'I'tazala 'anna", i.e. "He [Wasil] has departed from us." According to another version, the people began to say of Wasil and 'Amr "'I'tazala qawl al-'ummah", i.e. "they have departed from the doctrines held by the ummah," inventing a third

path.

Al-'Amr bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar:

Al-'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar is an essential Islamic duty, unanimously accepted by all Muslims. The difference occurs only in the limits and conditions related to it.

For instance, the Khawarij believed in it without any limits and conditions whatsoever. They believed that this twofold duty must be performed in all circumstances. For example, when others believed in the conditions of probability of effectiveness (of al-ma'ruf) and absence of any dangerous consequences as necessary for this obligation to be applicable, the Khawarij did not believe in any such restrictions. Some believed that it is sufficient to fulfil the duty of al-'amr wa al-nahy by the heart and the tongue i e one should support al-ma'ruf and oppose al-munkar in his heart and use his tongue to speak out for al-ma'ruf and against al-munkar. But the Khawarij considered it incumbent to take up arms and to unsheathe one's sword for the sake of fulfilling this duty.

As against them there was a group which considered al-'amr wa al-nahy to be subject to the above conditions, and, moreover, did not go beyond the confines of the heart and the tongue for its sake. Ahmad ibn Hanbal is counted among them. According to this group,a bloody uprising for the sake of struggling against unlawful activities is not permissible.

The Mu'tazilah accepted the conditions for al-'amr wa al-nahy, but, not limiting it to the heart and the tongue, maintained that if the unlawful practices become common, or if the state is oppressive and unjust, it is obligatory for Muslims to rise in armed revolt.

Thus the belief special to the Mu'tazilah in regard to al-'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar - contrary to the stand of the Ahl al-Hadith and the Ahl al-Sunnah - is belief in the necessity to rise up in arms to confront corruption. The Khawarij too shared this view, with the difference pointed out above.

OTHER MU'TAZILITE NOTIONS AND BELIEFS:

Whatever we said in the last two lectures was related to the basic doctrines of the Mu'tazilah. But as we mentioned before, the Mu'tazilah raised many an issue and defended their opinions about them. Some of them were related with theology some with physics, some with sociology, and some with the human situation. Of the theological issues, some are related to general metaphysics (umur 'ammah) and some with theology proper (ilahiyyat bi al-ma'na al-'akhass). [8] Like all other mutakallimun, the intended purpose of the Mu'tazilah by raising metaphysical questions is to use them as preparatory ground for the discussion of theological issues, which are their ultimate objectives. So also the discussions in the natural sciences, too,

serve an introductory purpose for them. That is, the discussions in the natural sciences are used to prove some religious doctrines, or to find an answer to some objections. Here we shall enumerate some of these beliefs, beginning with theology:

Theology:

(i) Al-tawhid al-sifati (i.e. unity of the Divine Attributes)

(ii) 'Adl (Divine Justice).

(iii) The Holy Qur'an (Kalam Allah) is created (kalam, or speech, is an attribute of Act, not of the Essence).

(iv) The Divine Acts are caused and controlled by purposes (i.e. every Divine Act is for the sake of some beneficial outcome).

(v) Forgiveness without repentance is not possible (the doctrine of retribution - wa'd wa wa'id).

(vi) Pre-eternity (qidam) is limited to God (in this belief, they are challenged only by the philosophers).

(vii) Delegation of a duty beyond the powers of the mukallaf (al-taklif bima la yutaq) is impossible.

(viii) The acts of the creatures are not created by God for five reasons;[9] the exercise of Divine Will does not apply to the acts of men.

(ix) The world is created, and is not pre-eternal (only the philosophers are against this view).

(x) God cannot be seen with the eyes, either in this world or in the Hereafter.

Physics:

(i) Physical bodies are made up of indivisible particles.

(ii) Smell relates to particles scattered in air.

(iii) Taste is nothing but the effect of particles.

(iv) Light is made up of particles scattered in space.

(v) Interpenetration of bodies is not impossible (this belief is attributed to some Mu'tazilah).

(vi) Leap (of particles) (i.e. tafrah) [10] is not impossible (this belief, too, is attributed to some Mu'tazilah).

Human Problems:

(i) Man is free, endowed with free will; not predetermined (this problem, the problem of the nature of human acts whether [created by God or man], and the problem of Divine Justice, all the three are interrelated).

(ii) Ability (istita'ah); that is, man has power over his own acts, before he performs them or desists from them.

(iii) The believer (mu'min) has the power to become an infidel and the infidel (kafir) is able to become a believer.

(iv) A fasiq is neither a mu'min, nor a kafir.

(v) Human reason can understand and judge some matters independently (without the prior need of guidance from the Shari'ah).

(vi) In case of conflict between reason and Hadith, reason is to be preferred.

(vii) It is possible to interpret the Qur'an with the help of reason.

Political and Social Problems:

(i) The obligatory nature of al-'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar, even if it necessitates taking up of arms.

(ii) The leadership (imamah) of the Rashidun Caliphs, was correct in the order it occurred.

(iii) 'Ali (A) was superior to the Caliphs who preceded him (this is the view of some of the Mu'tazilah, not of all. The earlier Mu'tazilah - with the exception of Wasil ibn 'Ata' considered Abu Bakr as the best, but the majority of the latter Mu'tazilah considered 'Ali (A) as superior).

(iv) Evaluation and criticism of the Companions of the Prophet (S) and their deeds is

permissible.

(v) A comparative study and analysis of the state policies of 'Umar and 'Ali (A).

These represent a sample of the issues touched by the Mu'tazilah, which are far more numerous than what we have referred to. In some of these problems, they were contradicted by the Asha'irah, in some by the philosophers, in some by the Khawarij, and in some by the Murji'ah.

The Mu'tazilah never submitted to Greek thought and did not accept Greek philosophy indiscriminately, which entered the Islamic world contemporaneous with the emergence and rise of the Mu'tazilah. On the other hand, with great courage, they wrote books against philosophy and philosophers, boldly expressing their own opinions. The controversy between the mutakallimun and the philosophers benefited both kalam and philosophy. Both of them made progress, and in the course of time came so close to each other that there did not remain any disagreement except on few issues. An elaborate discussion of the reciprocal services of kalam and philosophy, and an exposition of the essential differences between the two, are outside the scope of these lectures.

TRANSITIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE MU'TAZILAH:

Obviously, all the above-mentioned problems were not posed at one time and by any single individual. Rather, they were raised gradually by several individuals, expanding the scope of 'ilm al-kalam.

Among these mentioned, apparently the oldest problem was that of free will and determinism, in which the Mu'tazilah, of course, sided with free will. This is a problem which is posed in the Qur'an. That is, the Qur'an refers to this issue in a manner which stimulates thought on the subject. Because some verses clearly indicate that man is free, not coerced in any of his acts. On the other hand, there are verses which, with equal clarity, indicate that all things depend on the Divine Will.

Here the doubt arises that these two types of verses contradict each other. Accordingly, some explained away the verses upholding free will and supported determinism and predestination, while others explained away the verses which refer to the role of Divine Will and Intention, and sided with human freedom and free will. Of course, there is a third group which sees no contradiction between those two sets of verses.[11]

Moreover, this controversy between freedom and fate is frequently taken up in the utterances of 'Ali (A). Therefore, it is almost contemporaneous with Islam itself. However, the division of Muslims into two opposite camps, one siding with free will and the other with fate, took place in the second half of the lst/7th century.

It is said that the idea of free will was first put into circulation by Ghaylan al-Dimashqi and Ma'bad al-Juhani. The Banu Umayyah were inclined to propagate the belief in fate and predestination among the people, because it served their political interests. Under the cover of this belief that "everything is by the Will of God" - "amanna bi al-qadri khayrihi wa sharrihi" - "We believe in fate, bring as it may good or evil" - they justified their oppressive and illegitimate rule. As a result, they repressed any notions of free will or human freedom, and Ghaylan al-Dimashqi and Ma'bad al-Juhani were both killed. During that period the supporters of the belief in free will were called "Qadariyyah".

However, the problem of the infidelity or otherwise of the evildoer (kufr al-fasiq) had become a subject of controversy even before the issue of freedom and fate, because it was raised by the Khawarij during the first half of the first century about the time of the caliphate of 'Ali (A). But the Khawarij did not defend this view in the fashion of the mutakallimun. Only when the problem was raised among the Mu'tazilah, with the emergence of their doctrine of manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn, it took on the colour of a problem of kalam.

The problem of fate and freedom (jabr wa ikhtiyar) automatically brought in its wake such other problems as these: the problem of Divine Justice; the rational and essential goodness or badness (husn aw qubh dhati wa 'aqli) of things and acts; dependence of Divine Acts on purposes; impossibility of saddling a person with a duty exceeding his capacities, and the like.

During the first half of the 2nd/8th century one Jahm ibn Sakfwan (d. 128/745) voiced certain beliefs regarding the Divine Attributes. The writers of intellectual and religious history of Islam (milal wa nihal), claim that the problem of al-tawhid al-sifati (that the Divine Attributes are not separate from the Divine Essence - which the Mu'tazilah call their "doctrine of tawhid") and the problem of nafy al-tashbih, also called asl al-tanzih, (which means that nothing can be likened to God) was expressed for the first time by Jahm ibn Safwan, whose followers came to be called the "Jahmiyyah." The Mu'tazilah followed the Jahmiyyah in their doctrines of tawhid and tanzih, in the same way as they followed the Qadariyyah on the issue of free will. Jahm ibn Safwan himself was a Jabrite (i.e. a supporter of fate or predestination). The Mu'tazilah rejected his view of fate but accepted his view of tawhid.

The foremost among the Mu'tazilah, who established Mu'tazilism (al-'i'tizal) as a school of thought is Wasil ibn 'Ata', who, as mentioned earlier, was a pupil of al-Hasan al-Basri, and who parted company with his teacher in the course of a difference, to establish his own school. Two different versions of the cause why the Mu'tazilah came to be called by this name were mentioned earlier. Some others say that, in the beginning the term "mu'tazilah" was used to refer to a group of persons who remained neutral during the events of the Battle of al-Jamal and the Battle of Siffin, such as Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Zayd ibn Thabit, and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar.

Later when the issue of the faith or infidelity of fasiq was raised by the Khawarij, Muslims divided into two camps. One group of them took the third path, dissociating itself from the rest, being indifferent to their debates. They adopted the same kind of neutral attitude with regard to a theoretical problem as those like Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas had adopted in the midst of the heated social political climate of their time. This attitude caused them to be called "mu'tazilah" the "indifferent," a name which permanently stuck to them.

Wasil was born in the year 80/699 and died in 141/758-59. His views were limited to those on the negation of the Attributes [as distinct from the Essence of God], free will, manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn, al-wa'd wa al-wa'id, and opinions on some differences among the Companions.

After Wasil came 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd, who extended and gave final shape to the views of Wasil. After him came 'Amr ibn Abi al-Hudhayl al-'Allaf and Ibrahim ibn Sayyar al-Nazzam. Abu al-Hudhayl and al-Nazzim, both, are considered eminent Mu'tazilites. Kalam got its philosophical colour at their hands. Abu al-Hudhayl studied philosophical works and wrote books in their refutation. Al-Nazzam presented certain views in the sphere of physics, and it was he who offered the view that bodies are constituted of atoms. Abu al-Hudhayl died, most probably, in the year 255/869, and al-Nazzim in 231/845-46.

Al-Jahiz (159/775-254/868), the famous author of the al-Bayan wa al-tabyin, is another eminent Mu'tazilite of the 3rd/9th century.

During the rule of the Banu Umayyah, the Mu'tazilah did not have good relations with the ruling authorities. During the early days of the Banu al-'Abbas, they took on a neutral stand. [12] But during the rule of al-Ma'mun, who was himself learned in literature, sciences and philosophy, they attracted the ruler's patronage. Al-Ma'mun, and after him al-Mu'tasim and al-Wathiq, were staunch patrons of the Mu'tazilah. All the three caliphs called themselves Mu'tazilites.

It was during this period that a heated controversy began extending to all corners of the vast Islamic dominions of the period. The issue under debate was whether Speech is an attribute of the Divine Act or an attribute of the Essence. Whether it is created and temporal (hadith) or uncreated and eternal (qadim) like Divine Knowledge, Power, and Life. The Mu'tazilah believed that the Qur'an is created (in time) and, therefore, is a creation of God (makhluq) and so temporal. They also maintained that belief in the pre-eternity of the Qur'an amounted to infidelity (kufr).

The opponents of the Mu'tazilah, on the contrary, believed in the pre-eternity and uncreatedness of the Qur'an. Al-Ma'mun (r. 198/813 to 218/833) sent out a circular that any believer in the pre-eternity of the Qur'an would be liable to punishment. Many persons were thrown into prison and subjected to torture.

Al-Mu'tasim (r. 218/833 to 227/842) and al-Withiq (r. 227/842 to 232/847) also followed al-Ma'mun's practice. Of those who went to the prison during that time was Ahmad ibn Hanbal. This policy remained in force until al-Mutawakkil assumed power (r. 232/847 to 247/861). Al-Mutawakkil was not inclined in favour of the Mu'tazilah, and also most of the people were opposed to them. As a result the Mu'tazilah and their admirers suffered a reverse, nay, a reprisal. In the purges that followed, much blood was shed and homes were ruined. The period is remembered by Muslims as the times of "mihnah " - times of adversity and trial.

The Mu'tazilah never recuperated after this, and the field was left open forever for their opponents: the Ahl al-Sunnah and the Ahl al-Hadith. Nevertheless, there appeared some prominent personalities even during the following periods of their decline, like, 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi, well-known as al-Ka'bi (d. 319/ 931); Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i (d. 303/915-6); Abu al-Hashim al-Jubba'i (d. 321/933) the son of Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i; Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1024); Abu al-Hasan al-Khayyat; al-Sahib ibn 'Abbad, al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144); and Abu Ja'far al-'Iskafi.

ASHA'IRAH:

From the preceding lecture it became clear that the ideas and notions which led to the emergence of the Mu'tazilite school took birth during the latter half of the first century of Hijrah. The approach of the Mu'tazilah, in fact, consisted of the use of a kind of logical and rational method for understanding the basic doctrines of the Islamic faith. Obviously, the first condition for such an approach is belief in the freedom, independence, and validity of reason. It is also evident that the common people at large are not used to ratiocination and intellectual analysis, and always tend to equate "religiosity" with "credulity" and intellectual submission to the apparent meanings of the Qur'anic verses and in particular of the ahadith. They tend to consider every attempt at independent and original interpretation as a kind of rebellion against religion, specially if the dominant politics deem it in their interests to support this attitude, and more specially if some religious scholars propagate such an outlook, and particularly so when such scholars really believe in their literalist outlook and are inflexible and fanatical in practice. The attacks of the Akhbaris on the Usuliyyun and the mujtahidun, and the attacks of some fuqaha' and muhaddithun against philosophers in the Islamic world had their roots in such an approach.[13]

The Mu'tazilah had a deep-rooted interest in understanding Islam and its propagation and defence against the atheists, the Jews, the Christians, the Magians, the Sabaeans, the Manichaeans, and others. They even trained missionaries and dispatched them to various regions. Nevertheless, their existence was threatened by the literalists, who called themselves "Ahl al-Hadith" or "Ahl al-Sunnah." They were ultimately stabbed in the back, weakened and gradually became extinct.

Despite it all, in the beginning, that is until the end of the 3rd/9th century and the beginning of the 4th/l0th, there existed no rival school of kalam - as was later to emerge - that could challenge the Mu'tazilah. All opposition occurred under the claim that the views of the Mu'tazilah were against the externals of the hadith and the Sunnah. The leaders of the Ahl al-Hadith, such as Malik ibn Anas and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, basically considered any debate, inquiry or argument connected with the matters of faith as unlawful (haram). Therefore, the Ahl al-Sunnah not only did not have any system of kalam challenging the Mu'tazilah, but also they were opposed to kalam itself.

About the late 3rd/9th century and the early 4th/l0th, a new phenomenon took place. That was the appearance of a distinguished thinker who had received instruction in Mu'tazilite teachings under Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, and had mastered them. He rejected Mu'tazilite tenets and inclined towards the doctrines of the Ahl al-Sunnah. Since, on the one hand, he was not a man devoid of genius, and on the other was equipped with the tools used by the Mu'tazilah, he established all the doctrines of the Ahl al-Sunnah on a rational basis, and gave them the form of a relatively closely-knit intellectual system. That distinguished person was Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash'ari (d. circa 330/941-42). Al-'Ash'ari - as against the view of his predecessors among Ahl al-Hadith, like Abmad ibn Hanbal - considered debate and argument, and use of the tools of logic in the matter of the doctrines of the faith as permissible, citing evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah to support his claim. He wrote a treatise entitled "Risalah fi istihsan al-khawd fi 'ilm al-kalam" ("A Treatise on Appropriateness of Inquiry in 'Ilm al-Kalam). [14]

It was at this point that the Ahl al-Hadith were divided into two groups: the Asha'irah, or the followers of Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash'ari, who considered kalam as permissible; and the Hanbalis, or the followers of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who considered it unlawful. In our lectures on logic we have already mentioned that Ibn Taymiyyah, a Hanbali, wrote a book on unlawfulness of logic and kalam.[15] There was another reason why the Mu'tazilah became detestable in the eyes of the people. It was the period of calamity or "mihnah," and the Mu'tazilah under the patronage of the caliph al-Ma'mun, wanted to coerce the people into accepting their belief in the createdness of the Qur'an. This regimentation brought in its wake bloodshed, imprisonment, torture and exile, which shook the Muslim society. The common people considered the Mu'tazilah responsible for that havoc, and this earned them greater disfavour with the public.

These two causes contributed to the public welcome at the emergence of the school of Ash'arism. After Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash'ari, other distinguished personalities appeared in this school, who strengthened its foundations. Among them following can be mentioned: Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (a contemporary of al-Shaykh al-Mufid), who died in the year 403/1012-13 Abu Ishaq al-'Asfara'ini (who is considered as belonging to the generation after al-Baqillani and al-Sayyid al-Murtada 'Alam al-Huda); Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni, the teacher of al-Ghazali; Imam Muhammad al-Ghazali, the author of Ihya' 'ulum al-Din himself (d. 505/1111-12); and Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.

Of course, the Ash'arite school underwent gradual changes, and particularly in the hands of al-Ghazali kalam somewhat lost its characteristic colour and took on the hue of 'irfan (Sufism). Imam al-Razi brought it close to philosophy. After Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi wrote his book Tajrid al-'i'tiqad more than ninety per cent of kalam assumed the colour of philosophy. After the publication of the Tajrid, all mutakallimun - including the Mu'tazilah and the Asha'irah - followed the same road which was trodden by that great philosopher and Shi'ah mutakallim.

For instance, the latter works of kalam such as al-Mawaqif and Maqasid and the commentaries written upon them - all took on the colour of the Tajrid. It may be said that, in fact, the more time has elapsed since Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash'ari, the more the leading Ash'arites have moved away from him, bringing his doctrines closer to the views of the Mu'tazilah or those of the philosophers.

Now we shall list the main doctrines of al-Ash'ari, which are aimed at defending the basic principles of the Ahl al-Sunnah, or attempting a rational justification of their beliefs.

(i) The Divine Attributes, contrary to the belief of the Mu'tazilah and the philosophers, are not identical with the Divine Essence.

(ii) The Divine Will is all-embracing. The Divine providence and predestination encompass all events (this belief, too, is contrary to the view held by the Mu'tazilah, though in agreement with those of the philosophers).

(iii) All evil, like good, is from God (of course, this view is a logical corollary, in al-Ash'ari's view of the above belief).

(iv) Man is not free in his acts, which are created by God (this belief, too, in al-Ash'ari's view, necessarily follows from the doctrine of all-embracing nature of the Divine Will).

(v) Acts are not intrinsically good or evil, i.e. husn or qubh of deeds is not intrinsic, but determined by the Shari'ah. The same is true of justice. What is 'just', is determined by the Shari'ah not by reason (contrary to the belief of the Mu'tazilah).

(vi) Grace (lutf) and selection of the best for creation (al-'aslah) are not incumbent upon God (contrary to the belief of the Mu'tazilah).

(vii) Man's power over his actions does not precede them [there is no istita'ah qabl al-fi'l], but is commensurate and concurrent with the acts themselves (contrary to the belief of the Muslim philosophers and the Mu'tazilah).

(viii) Absolute deanthropomorphism (tanzih mutlaq), or absolute absence of similarity between God and others, does not hold (contrary to the Mu'tazilite view).

(ix) Doctrine of acquisition: Man does not 'create' his own acts; rather he 'acquires' or 'earns' them (this is in justification of the Ahl al-Sunnah's belief in the creation of human acts by God).

(x) Possibility of the beatific vision: God shall be visible to the eyes on the Day of Resurrection (contrary to the view of the Mu'tazilah and the philosophers).

(xi) The fasiq is a believer (mu'min) (contrary to the view of the Khawarij, who consider him kafir, and contrary to the Mu'tazilite doctrine of manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn).

(xii) There is nothing wrong about God's pardoning someone without repentance. Similarly, nothing is wrong about God's subjecting a believer to chastisement (contrary to the Mu'tazilite position).

(xiii) Intercession (shafa'ah) is justifiable (contrary to the Mu'tazilite position).

(xiv) To tell a lie or break a promise is not possible for God.

(xv) The world is created in time (hadith) (contrary to the view of the philosophers).

(xvi) The Qur'an is pre-eternal (qadim); however, this is true of al-kalam al-nafsi (meaning of the Qur'an), not al-kalam al-lafzi - the spoken word (this is in justification of the Ahl al-Sunnah's belief in the pre-eternity of the Qur'an).

(xvii) The Divine Acts do not follow any purpose or aim (contrary to the view of the philosophers and the Mu'tazilah)

(xviii) It is possible that God may saddle a person with a duty beyond his power (contrary to the belief of the philosophers and the Mu'tazilah).

Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash'ari was a prolific writer, and as reported had compiled more than two hundred books. As many as a hundred are mentioned in his biographical accounts, though, apparently, most of those works have perished. The most famous of his works is Maqalat al-'Islamiyyin, which has been published. It is a very disorderly and confused work. Another one printed is al-Luma', and perhaps other of his works may have also appeared in print.

Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash'ari is one of those individuals whose ideas, regrettably, exercised a great influence on the Islamic world. Nevertheless, later, his works have been put to severe

criticism by philosophers and the Mu'tazilah. Ibn Sina, in al-Shifa; has refuted many of his ideas without mentioning his name. Even some of his followers, such as Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani and Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni revised and modified his views about predestination and createdness of (human) acts.

Imam Muhammad al-Ghazali, although an Ash'arite who has to a great extent established and strengthened the Ash'arite doctrines, has put them on a different foundation. Through al-Ghazali, kalam was brought closer to 'irfan and Sufism. Mawlana Muhammad al-Rumi, the author of the Mathnawi, is, in his own way, an Ash'arite; but his deep Sufi inclinations gave a different colour to all the issues of kalam. Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, who was familiar with philosophic thought, transformed al-'Ash'ari's kalam, further strengthening it.

The triumph of the Ash'arite school cost the Muslim world dearly. Its triumph was the victory of the forces of stagnation over freedom of thought. Despite the fact that the battle between Ash'arism and Mu'tazilism is related to the Sunni world, even the Shi'ite world could not remain unaffected from some of the stultifying effects of Ash'arism. This triumph has particular historical and social reasons behind it, and certain political events effectively contributed to it.

As mentioned earlier, during the 3rd/9th century, the caliph al-Ma'mun, himself an intellectual and a man of learning, rose to the support of the Mu'tazilah. After him al-Mu'tasim and al-Wathiq also followed him - until al-Mutawakkil assumed caliphate. Al-Mutawakkil played a basic role in the victory of the Ahl al-Sunnah's doctrines, which acquired dialectic foundations after one hundred years at the hands of al-'Ash'ari. To be sure, had al-Mutawakkil's way of thinking been similar to that of his predecessors, Mu'tazilism would have had a different fate.

The rise of the Seljuq Turks to power in Iran was another effective factor in the triumph and propagation of the Ash'arite ideas. The Seljuqs did not believe in the freedom of thought. They were the antithesis of the Buyids, some of whom were men of scholarship and literary merit. Shi'ism and Mu'tazilism flourished in the Buyid court. Ibn al-'Amid and al-Sahib ibn 'Abbad, the two learned ministers of the Buyids, were both anti-Ash'arites.

Here we do not intend to support Mu'tazilite doctrines, and later we shall expose the feebleness of many of their beliefs. However, that which deserves appreciation in the Mu'tazilah is their rational approach - something which also became extinct with them. As we know, a religion so rich and resourceful as Islam needs a kalam which has an unshakeable faith in the freedom of reason.

THE SHI'ITE KALAM:

Now it is time to take up Shi'ite kalam, if only briefly. Kalam, in the sense of logical and

rational argument about the principal doctrines of Islam, has a special and distinguished place in the Shi'ah tradition. The Shi'ite kalam, on the one hand, emerges from the core of Shi'ite hadith, and, on the other, is mixed with Shi'ite philosophy. We have seen how, in the early centuries, kalam was considered to be inimical to the Sunnah and the hadith by the Ahl al-Sunnah. But the Shi'ite kalam not only does not come into conflict with the Sunnah and the hadith, it is firmly rooted in the Sunnah and the hadith. The reason is that the Shi'ite hadith, contrary to the Sunni corpus on hadith, consists of numerous traditions in which profound metaphysical or social problems have been dealt with logically and analysed rationally. But in the Sunni corpus such analytic treatment of these subjects is missing. For instance, if there is any mention of such problems as that of Divine providence and preordination, the all-embracing Will of the Almighty, the Divine Names, Attributes, or such topics as the soul, the life after death, the final reckoning, the Sirat, the Balance, or such issues as Imamah, khilafah, and the like, there is no argument or rational explanation of the topics mentioned. But in the Shi'ah corpus on hadith, all such issues have been dealt with in a rational and discursive manner. A comparison between the list of the chapters of the six Sihah and that of al-Kulayni's al-Kafi will make this quite clear.

Accordingly, "kalam", in the sense of rational and analytical treatment of problems, is found in the Shi'ah hadith. This is the reason why the Shi'ah were not divided into two groups like the Sunnis were into "Ahl al-Hadith" and "Ahl al-Kalam."

It was on the basis of the Sunni textual sources that we stated, in the former lectures, that the first doctrinal issue to become a subject of controversy was the issue of the kufr of a fasiq, brought up by the Khawarij during the first half of the first century. Then emerged the problem of freedom and fate, which was raised and argued by two individuals by the names of Ma'bad al-Juhani and Ghaylan al-Dimashqi. The belief they professed in this matter was contrary to the one held and propagated by the Umayyad rulers. Thereafter, during the first half of the second century, the notion of the unity of Divine Attributes and Essence was posed by Jahm ibn Safwan. Thereupon, Wasil ibn 'Ata' and 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd, the founders of the Mu'tazilite school, adopting the belief in free will from Ma'bad and Ghaylan and the doctrine of the unity of Divine Essence and Attributes from Jahm ibn Safwan, and themselves innovating the doctrine of manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn in the issue of the faith or infidelity of fasiq, initiated debates in some other issues, thus founding the first school in Islamic kalam.

This is how the Orientalists and the scholars of Islamic studies in the West and the East explain and interpret the origins of rational speculation and debates in the Islamic world. This group, advertently or mistakenly, ignores the profound rational and demonstrative arguments advanced for the first time by Amir al-Muminin 'Ali (A). The truth is that the rational approach in Islamic teachings was first initiated by 'Ali (A) in his sermons and discussions. It was he who for the first time initiated profound discussion on the subjects of Divine Essence and Attributes, temporality (huduth) and pre-eternity (qidam), simplicity (basatah) and compositeness (tarkib), unity (wahdah) and plurality (kathrah), etc. These are recorded in the

Nahj al-balaghah and other authentic texts of Shi'ah hadith. These discussions have a colour, perfume and spirit which are totally distinct from the approaches of the Mu'tazilah and the Asha'irah to the controversies of kalam, or even from that of the Shi'ah scholars, who were influenced by their contemporary kalam.

In our Sayr dar Nahj al-balaghah ("A Journey Through the Nahj al-balaghah"), and in our preface to the Vol. V of Usul-e falsafeh wa rawish-e riyalism, we have discussed this matter.

Sunni historians confess that from the earliest days the Shi'ite thinking was philosophical in approach. The Shi'ite intellectual and theoretical approach is opposed not only to the Hanbali thinking - which fundamentally rejects the idea of using discursive reasoning in religious belief - and the Ash'arite approach - which denies the independence of reason and subordinates it to literalist appearance - but also to the Mu'tazilite thinking with all its predilection for reason. Because, although the Mu'tazilite thought is rational, it is dialectical or polemical (jadali), not discursive or demonstrative (burhani).

In our lectures on the basics of Islamic philosophy, where we have clarified the difference between peripatetic (hikmat al-mashsha') and illuminationist (hikmat al-'ishraq) philosophies, we have also explained the difference between dialectical (Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite) kalam and mystical or intuitive approaches to philosophical issues.[16] That is the reason why the majority of Islamic philosophers have been Shi'ah. Only the Shi'ah have preserved and kept Islamic philosophy alive, since they acquired this spirit from their Imams (A), particularly from the first Imam, Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A).

The Shi'ah philosophers, without having to mould philosophy into kalam and without transforming rational philosophy into dialectical philosophization, consolidated the doctrinal basis of Islam under the inspiration of the Qur'anic Revelation and the guiding principles of their spiritual leaders. If we wish to enumerate the Shi'ah mutakallimun, that is those who have applied rational thought to the doctrines of the Faith, we shall have to include a group of muhaddithun as well as a group of Shi'ah philosophers among them. Because, as said earlier, both the Shi'ite hadith and the Shi'ite philosophy have accomplished the function of 'ilm al-kalam to a greater extent than kalam itself.

But if by "mutakallimun" we mean only that group which under the Mu'tazilite or Ash'arite influence had resorted to the tools of dialectical reasoning, we are forced to select only a particular group of them. However, we see no reason to concentrate our attention on this particular group only.

If we leave the utterances of the infallible Imams (A) about doctrines, delivered in the forms of sermons, narratives, or prayers, the first Shi'ah writer to compile a book on doctrines of faith was 'Ali ibn Isma'il ibn Mitham al-Tammar. Mitham al-Tammar himself was an orator, expert in debating, and was one of the closest companions of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A). 'Ali

ibn Isma'il was his grandson. He was a contemporary of 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd and Abu al-Hudhayl al-'Allaf, the famous figures of kalam during the first half of the second century, who were from the first generation of the founders of Mu'tazilite kalam.

Among the companions of al-Imam al-Sadiq (A), there is a group of individuals, referred to as "mutakallim" by the Imam (A) himself, such as Hisham ibn al-Hakam, Hisham ibn Salim, Humran ibn A'yan, Abu Ja'far al-'Ahwal - known as "Mu'min al-Taq" - Qays ibn Masar, and others.

Al-Kafi relates the story of a debate between this group and an opponent in the presence of al-Imam al-Sadiq (A), which pleased him. This group lived during the first half of the second century, and was trained in the school of al-Imam al-Sadiq (A). This shows that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), not only themselves engaged in discussion and analysis of the problems of kalam, they also trained a group of their pupils for the sake of conducting such debates and arguments. Among them Hisham ibn al-Hakam distinguished himself only in 'ilm al-kalam, not in tafsir, fiqh, or hadith. Al-Imam al-Sadiq (A) used to treat him with more respect than others even when he was a raw youth, and used to offer him a preferred seat. All are in agreement that the Imam paid him so much respect just because of his expertise in kalam.

By showing preference for Hisham the mutakallim over other pupils, experts in hadith and fiqh, al-Imam al-Sadiq (A), in fact, wanted to raise the status of kalam as against hadith and fiqh. Obviously, such an attitude of the Imams (A) played a decisive role in the promotion of 'ilm al-kalam, and as a result, gave the Shi'i thought a dialectical and philosophical character.

Al-Imam al-Rida (A) personally participated in debates in which al-Ma'mun invited mutakallimun of various schools to take part. The records of such meetings are preserved in the Shi'i texts.

It is indeed very amazing that the Orientalists should be completely silent about all such events pertaining to the efforts of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A) and ignore the role of the Infallible Imams (A) in the revival of rational inquiry in matters of religious doctrine.

Fadl ibn Shadhan al-Nishaburi, a companion of al-Imam al-Rida (A), al-Imam al-Jawad (A), and al-Imam al-Hadi (A), whose tomb is in Nishabur, apart from being a faqih and a muhaddith, was also a mutakallim. He is reported to have written a large number of books.

The Nawbakht family produced many illustrious personalities, most of whom were mutakallimun. Fadl ibn Abi Sahl ibn al-Nawbakht, a contemporary of Harun, was attached with the famous Bayt al-Hikmah library, and well-known as a translator from Persian into Arabic; Ishaq ibn Abi Sahl ibn al-Nawbakht; his son, Isma'il ibn Ishaq ibn Sahl ibn al-Nawbakht; his another son, 'Ali ibn Ishaq; his grandson, Abu Sahl Isma'il ibn 'Ali ibn Ishaq ibn Abi Sahl ibn al-Nawbakht, (called "shaykh al-mutakallimin" of the Shi'ah), Hasan ibn

Musa al-Nawbakht, a nephew of Isma'il ibn 'Ali, and several others of this family - all are Shi'i mutakallimun.

Ibn Qubbah al-Razi in the 3rd/9th century, and Abu 'Ali ibn Miskawayh, the famous doctor of medicine and the author of Tahdhib al-'akhlaq wa tathir al-'a'raq, during the early 5th/11th century, are also Shi'i mutakallimun.

The Shi'i mutakallimun are many. Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, the famous philosopher, mathematician, and the author of the Tajrid al-'I'tiqad, and al-'Allamah al-Hilli, the well-known faqih and commentator of the Tajrid al-'I'tiqad, are well-known mutakallimun of the 7th/13th century.

Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, himself a learned philosopher, created the most solid work of kalam through his writing of the Tajrid al-'I'tiqad. Since its compilation, the Tajrid has attracted the attention of all mutakallimun, whether Shi'ah or Sunni. Al-Tusi has, to a great extent, brought kalam out of dialectical labyrinth and made it closer to discursive (rational) philosphy. During the latter ages, kalam almost completely lost its dialectical form. All thinkers became followers of discursive (rational) philosophy, and, in fact, left the camp of dialectical philosophy to join philosophy proper.

The Shi'ite philosophers after al-Tusi brought the essential problems of kalam into philosophy, and applied the philosophical methods of enquiry to the study and analysis of these problems with greater success than attained by the mutakallimun who employed the older methods. For example, Mulla Sadra or Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, though they are not usually counted among mutakallimun, have been far more influential in Islamic thought than any of the mutakallimun.

It is a fact that if we compare their approach to that of the basic Islamic texts, such as the Qur'an, the Nahj al-balaghah, and the prayers and traditions transmitted from the Ahl al-Bayt (A), we shall find this approach and style of reasoning to be closer to that of the original teachers of the faith. Here we are compelled to be content with these brief references only.

THE SHI'I STANDPOINT:

In this lecture it is necessary to briefly explain the Shi'ite views on the issues current among the Muslim mutakallimun. Earlier, while explaining the Mu'tazilite viewpoint, we stated that the Mu'tazilah considered their five doctrines, viz., tawhid, 'adl, al-wa'd wa al-wa'id, manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn, and al-'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar, as being fundamental to their school of thought. We have also said that the reason for giving prominence to these doctrines above all other Mu'tazilite beliefs lies in the fact that they characterize their school and distinguish it from the schools of their opponents. It should not be construed that these five principles constitute the basic doctrines of the faith (usul al-Din)

in the eyes of the Mu'tazilah, and that all the remaining beliefs are regarded as subsidiary.

The Shi'ite scholars - not the Shi'ite Imams (A) - from the earliest days, have also introduced five doctrines as being characteristic of Shi'ism. They are: tawhid, 'adl, nubuwwah, imamah, and ma'ad (Resurrection). It is generally said that these five are the basic tenets of the faith (usul al-Din) and the rest have a subordinate significance, or are "furu' al-Din". Here, inevitably, the question arises that if by "usul al-Din" we mean the doctrines belief in which is essential for being a Muslim, they are not more than two: tawhid and nubuwwah. Only these are the two beliefs contained in the Shahadatayn ("'ashhadu 'an la ilaha illallahu wa 'ashhadu 'anna Muhammadan rasulullah") Moreover, the second testimony is related in particular to the prophethood of Muhammad (S), not to prophethood in general, and the prophethood of other prophets is not covered by it. However, belief in the prophethood of all the other prophets (A) is a part of the usul al-Din, and faith in it is compulsory for all believers.

If by usul al-Din we mean the doctrines faith in which is an essential part of the faith from the Islamic viewpoint, then belief in other matters, such as the existence of the angels - as explicitly stated by the Qur'an - is also essential for faith.[17] Furthermore, what is special about the Attribute of 'adl (justice) that only this Divine Attribute should be included in the essential doctrine, to the exclusion of all other attributes, such as Knowledge, Life, Power, Hearing or Vision? If the belief in the Divine Attributes is necessary, all of them should be believed in; if not, none ought to be made the basis of the faith.

Actually, the fivefold principles were selected in such a manner so as, on the one hand, to determine certain tenets essential to the Islamic faith,and on the other to specify the particular identity of the school. The doctrines of tawhid, nubuwwah, and ma'ad are the three which are essential for every Muslim to believe in. That is, these three are part of the objectives of Islam; the doctrine of 'adl being the specific mark of the Shi'ite school.

The doctrine of 'adl, although it is not a part of the main objectives of the Islamic faith - in the sense that it does not differ from the other articles of faith pertaining to Knowledge, Life, Power, etc -, but is one of those doctrines which represent the specific Shi'i outlook with regard to Islam.

The article on imamah, from the Shi'ite viewpoint, covers both these aspects, i.e. it is both a part of the essential doctrines and also characterizes the identity of the Shi'ite school.

If faith in the existence of the angels is also, on the authority of the Qur'an, essential and obligatory, then why was it not stated as a sixth article of the faith? The answer is that the above-mentioned articles are part of the objectives of Islam. That is, the Holy Prophet (S) called the people to believe in them. This means that the mission of the Prophet (S) prepared the ground for the establishment of these beliefs. But the belief in the angels or in the obligatory duties, such as prayer and fasting, is not a part of the objectives of the

prophethood; it rather forms an essential accessory of it. In other words, such beliefs are essential accessories of faith in prophethood, but are not the objectives of prophethood.

The issue of imamah, if viewed from a socio-political standpoint or from the viewpoint of government and leadership, is similar to that of 'adl. That is, in that case, it is not an essential part of the faith. However, if viewed from a spiritual viewpoint - that is from the viewpoint that the Imam, to use the terminology of hadith, is the hujjah (proof) of God and His khalifah (vicegerent), who in all periods of time serves as a spiritual link between every individual Muslim and the perfect human being - then it is to be considered as one of the articles of faith.

Now we shall take separately each of the particular doctrines of Shi'ite kalam, including the above-mentioned fivefold doctrines:

(i) Tawhid:

Tawhid is also one of the fivefold doctrines of the Mu'tazilah, as it is also one of the Asha'irah's, with the difference that in the case of the Mu'tazilah it specifically means al-tawhid al-sifati, which is denied by the Asha'irah. On the other hand, the specific sense of this term as affirmed by the Asha'irah is al-tawhid al-'af'ali, which is rejected by the Mu'tazilah.

As mentioned above, al-tawhid al-dhati and al-tawhid al-'ibadi, since they are admitted by all, are outside the scope of our discussion. The conception of tawhid upheld by the Shi'ah, in addition to al-tawhid al-dhati and al-tawhid al-'ibadi, also includes al-tawhid al-sifati and al-tawhid al-'af'ali. That is, in the controversy regarding the Attributes, the Shi'ah are on the side of al-tawhid al-sifati, and in the debate on human acts, are on the side of al-tawhid al-'af'ali. Nevertheless, the conception of al-tawhid al-sifati held by the Shi'ah is different from the same held by the Mu'tazilah. Also, their notion of al-tawhid al-'af'ali differs from the notion of the same held by the Asha'irah.

The conception of al-tawhid al-sifati of the Mu'tazilah is synonymous with the idea of the absence of all Attributes from the Divine Essence, or is equivalent to the conception of the Divine Essence being devoid of all qualities. But the Shi'i notion of al-tawhid al-sifati means identity of the Attributes with the Divine Essence.[18] For an elaborate discussion of this issue one should study works on Shi'ite kalam and philosophy.

The Shi'i conception of al-tawhid al-'af'ali differs from the one held by the Asha'irah. The Ash'arite notion of al-tawhid al-'af'ali means that no creature is of any consequence in the scheme of things, and everything is directly ordained by God. Accordingly, He is also the direct creator of the deeds of the human beings, and they are not creators of their own acts. Such a belief is similar to the idea of absolute predestination and has been refuted through many an argument. However, the notion of al-tawhid al-'af'ali upheld by the Shi'ah means that

the system of causes and effects is real, and every effect, while being dependent on its proximate cause, is also dependent on God. These two modes of dependence do not operate in parallel but in series. For further clarification of this subject see my book Insan wa sarnewisht ("Man and Destiny").

(ii) 'Adl:

The doctrine of 'adl is common between the Shi'ah and the Mu'tazilah. 'Adl means that God bestows His mercy and blessings and so also His trials and chastisement according to prior and intrinsic deservedness of beings, and that Divine mercy and trial, reward and punishment are determined in accordance with a particular order or law (which is also of Divine origin).

The Asha'irah deny this notion of 'adl and such an order. In their view, the belief in 'adl in the sense of a just order, as outlined above, necessitates God's subjection and subordination to something else and thus contradicts His Absolute Power. 'Adl in itself implies several corollaries which shall be referred to while explaining other doctrines.

(iii) Free Will and Freedom:

The Shi'ah doctrine of free will is to some extent similar to that of Mu'tazilah. But the two differ with regard to its meaning. Human freedom or free will for the Mu'tazilah is equivalent to Divine resignation (tafwid), i.e. leaving man to himself and suspension of the Divine Will from any effective role. Of course, this, as proved in its proper place, is impossible.

Freedom and free will, as believed by the Shi'ah, mean that men are created as free beings. But they, like any other creature, are entirely dependent on the Divine Essence for their existence and all its multifarious modes, including the mode of action, all of which are derived from and are dependent on God's merciful care, and seek help from His Will.

Accordingly, free will and freedom in Shi'ism occupy an intermediate position between the Ash'arite (absolute) predestination (jabr) and the Mu'tazilite doctrine of freedom (tafwid). This is the meaning of the famous dictum of the Infallible Imams (A:): "la jabra wa la tafwida bal 'amrun bayna 'amrayn":

> Neither Jabr nor tafwid; but something intermediate between the two (extreme) alternatives.

The doctrine of free will is a corollary to the doctrine of Divine Justice.

(iv) Inherent Morality or Immorality of Deeds (Husn wa Qubh Dhati):

The Mu'tazilah believe that all deeds are inherently and intrinsically either good or evil. For example, justice is intrinsically good and oppression is inherently evil. The wise man selects the good works and abstains from bad deeds. And since God the Almighty is Wise His Wisdom necessitates that He should do good and abstain from 'evil. Thus the inherent goodness or badness of acts on the one hand, and the Wisdom of God on the other, necessitate that some acts are "obligatory" for God and some "undesirable."

The Asha'irah are severely opposed to this belief. They deny both the inherent goodness or badness of acts and the applicability of such judgements as "obligatory" or "undesirable" to God.

Some Shi'ah thinkers, under the influence of the Mu'tazilite kalam, accepted the Mu'tazilite view in its above-mentioned form, but others, with greater insight, while accepting the doctrine of inherent morality or immorality of acts, rejected the view that the judgements of permissibility or undesirability are applicable to the Divine realm.[19]

(v) Grace (lutf) and Choice of the Best (intikhab al-'aslah):

There is a controversy between the Asha'irah and the Mu'tazilah whether or not Grace or 'choice of the best' for the good of human beings is a principle which governs the universe. The Mu'tazilah considered grace as a duty and obligation incumbent upon God. The Asha'irah denied Grace and 'Choice of the best.'

However, the principle of grace is a corollary to the doctrine of justice and the doctrine of the innate goodness or badness of deeds. Some Shi'ite mutakallimun have accepted the doctrine of grace in its Mu'tazilite form, but others who consider it absolutely wrong to apply the notion of "duty" and "obligation" to God, advance another version of the doctrine of the "choice of the best," which it is not possible to elaborate here.

(vi) Independence and Validity of Reason:

Shi'ism affirms a greater independence, authority and validity for reason than the Mu'tazilah.

According to certain indisputable traditions of the Ma'sumun (A), reason is the internalized prophetic voice in the same way as a prophet is reason externalized. In the Shi'ite fiqh, reason ('aql) is considered as one of the four valid primary sources of the Law.

(v) 'Aim' and 'Purpose' of Divine Acts:

The Asha'irah reject the notion that the Divine Acts may be for one or several purposes or aims. They state that possession of a purpose or goal is solely applicable to man and other

similar creatures. But God is above such matters, since having a purpose and aim implies subjection of a doer to that purpose or aim. God is free from and above every kind of limit, restriction, and subordination be as it may the limit imposed by a purpose.

The Shi'ah affirm the Mu'tazilite belief with regard to purposiveness of Divine Acts. They believe that there is a difference between the purpose of the act and the purpose of the doer. That which is impossible is that God may seek to satisfy some purpose of His own through His Acts; however, a purpose or aim which is directed to the benefit of a creature is not at all incompatible with Divine perfection and the supremacy of His self-sufficing Essence.

(vi) The Possibility of Bada' (Divine abrogation of predestiny):

Bada' is possible in Divine Acts, in the same way as it occurs in the abrogation of the Divinely decreed laws. An elaborate and satisfactory study of the issue of bada' may be found in such profound philosophical books as al-'Asfar.

(ix) Vision (ru'yah) of God:

The Mu'tazilah vehemently deny the possibility of seeing God with the eyes. They believe that one may only have faith in God, a faith which is rooted in the mind and the intellect. That is, one can acquire a firm conviction in the depth of one's soul and mind in the existence of God, and this is the highest kind of faith one may attain. God can by no means be seen or observed. This is testified by the Qur'an when it says:

> The sights do not perceive Him, and He perceives the sights, and He is All-subtle (incapable of being perceived) and All-knowing (i.e. perceives the eyes and the rest of things). (6:103).

The Asha'irah, with equal vehemence, assert that God can be seen with the eyes, but only on the Day of Resurrection. They also cite as evidence certain Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions to support their claim. One of the verses they cite is:

> (Some) faces on that Day shall be bright, looking towards their Lord. (75:22-23)

The Shi'ah believe that God can never be seen with the eyes, neither in this life nor in the Hereafter. Nevertheless, the highest kind of faith is not an intellectual one. The intellectual faith is 'ilm al-yaqin. A higher level of faith than that of the intellect is 'ayn al-yaqin - certitude of the heart. 'Ayn al-yaqin (lit. certitude by sight) means witnessing God with the heart, not with the eyes. Thus, though God cannot be seen with the eyes, He is 'visible' to the heart. 'Ali (A) was once asked, "Have you seen God?" He replied, "I have not worshipped a god whom I have not seen. But He is visible to the hearts, not to the eyes." The Imams (A)

were asked whether the Prophet (S) saw God during his Ascension (mi'raj). Their reply was: "With the eyes? No. With the heart? Yes." In this matter only the Sufis have a viewpoint resembling the Shi'ah position.

(x) The Faith or Infidelity of the Fasiq:

On this issue, which has often been referred to earlier, the Shi'ah position is in agreement with that of the Asha'irah, but is different from the views of the Khawarij (who believe that a fasiq is kafir) and the Mu'tazilah (who believe in manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn).

(xi) The Infallibility ('ismah) of the Prophets and the Imams:

This belief is characteristic of the Shi'ah who hold that the prophets (A) and the Imams (A) are infallible and do not commit any major or minor sin whatsoever.

(xii) Forgiveness (maghfirah) and Intercession (shafa'ah):

On this issue, also, the Shi'ah differ from the cut-and-dry Mu'tazilite position that anybody who dies without repentance cannot possibly get the benefit of Divine forgiveness or (the Prophet's) intercession. Similarly, their position is also at variance with the indulgent and extravagant notion of shafa'ah held by the Asha'irah.[20]

NOTES:

[1]. See Murtada Mutahhari, Sayri dar Nahj al-balaghah, pp.69-76, where the author has discussed the difference between the approach of the Nahj al-balaghah to the problems of theology and metaphysics and the approach of Muslim mutakallimun and philosophers to such problems. (Translator)

[2]. "Zanadiqah" (sing. zindiq), a term applied heterogeneously and relatively, is used to describe any heretic group whose belief deviates radically from the Islamic doctrines. The author, probably, refers by it to one or more of such sects as the Mu'attilah, who denied the creation and the Creator, reducing the world to an unstable mixture of the four elements, the Manawiyyah (Manichaeans); and Mazdakiyyah, who were dualists, etc. (Translator)

[3]. See Murtada Mutahhari, Insan wa sarnewisht (Man and Destiny).

[4]. See Murtada Mutahhari, 'Adl-e ilahi (Divine Justice), "the Introduction," pp. 7-43.

[5]. Translator's Note: There are at least seventy-five places where the various derivatives of the root kalimah occur in the Qur'an. In three places the phrase kalam Allah is used in

reference to the Qur'an (2:75, 9:6, 48:15). The word kalimah (word, statement), or the plural kalimat, with reference to God occurs at least thirty times in the Qur'an, twice with reference to Jesus (A) who is called a "kalimah" of God. The Gospel of John designates Jesus Christ (A) as the "Eternal Word of God." The Qur'an also speaks of Jesus as a Word of God, while according to John's Gospel he is the Word, eternal and uncreated: "Before the world was created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God." We are further told: "Through him God made all things, not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life .... the Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son."

Probably the Christian belief in Jesus as the uncreated kalimat Allah (Word of God), some kind of a demiurge - a belief which probably emerged as a result of Manichaean influence on early Christianity - had prompted the early Muslims, engaged in polemics with Christians on the nature of Jesus Christ, to consider in their turn, the Qur'an, the Kalam Allah, as uncreated and eternal.

[6]. 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Usul-e falsafah wa rawishe riyalism ("The Principles and Method of Realism"), vol. V (chapter XIV), the introduction by Murtada Mutahhari, who has written very elaborate footnotes on the text of 'Allamah Tabataba'is book.

[7]. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Badawi, Madhahib al- 'Islamiyyin, vol. I, p. 34. Apparently, the author does not consider the Tahawiyyah, the Maturidiyyah and the Zahiriyyah as among the major schools of kalam, or not important enough to be included in this brief survey. (Translator)

[8]. Translator's Note: Both theology and metaphysics are referred to by the common term al-'ilahiyyat (lit. theology). Whenever only theology proper is meant, the phrase "bil-ma'na al-'akhass" (lit. in its special sense) is added. Metaphysics, which deals with general problems, is termed "al-'umur al-'ammah" (lit. the general issues).

[9]. Translator's Note: Some of these reasons are following: (1) Every human being is aware that his daily acts, such as going to the market or having a walk, for instance, depend on his will; he is free to do them if, he likes, and to abstain if he wills. (2) If all our acts are imposed upon us, there would be no difference between a virtuous act and a wicked one; whereas even a child makes a difference between a kind and a cruel act. He likes the first and detests the second. If all our acts are determined by God, they would be all alike; that is, there would be no difference between good and evil, between virtue and vice. (3) If God creates all our acts, it is pointless for Him to command some things and forbid others, and consequently to reward and punish accordingly. (4) If we are not free in our acts, it is unjust of God to create sins in creatures and then punish them on their account.

[10]. Translator's Note: The notion of motion in leaps (tafrah) was first suggested by al-Nazzam. It means that a body undergoes discrete leaps during motion. The modern parallel of this idea of motion is one employed by quantum mechanics. Max Planck, in 1900, put forward the hypothesis that the charged particle - usually called the oscillator, or vibrator - which is the source of monochromatic light, absorbs and emits energy only in discrete quanta. It changes its energy not continuously, as supposed in the classical theory of radiation, but by sudden

jumps (tafrah). In 1913 Niels Bohr, applying the quantum theory to subatomic phenomena, published the quantum theory of the atom. Since then quantum mechanics has become an important part of atomic physics.

[11]. Translator's Note: The verses 57:22 and 4:78 seem to convey a meaning contradictory to that of 4:79 and 18:29. While the former imply total predestination, the latter explicitly support the idea of freedom. The Asha'irah attach basic importance to the former and the Mu'tazilah to the latter kind. The Shi'ah reconcile the two sets of verses and take an intermediary position. The following traditions from al-Shaykh al-Saduq's al-Tawhid, pp.360-362 (Jami'at al-mudarrisin fi al-Hawzat al-'Ilmiyyah, Qum), explain the Shi'ah position:

> ...Al-Imam al-Baqir (A) and al-Imam al-Sadiq (A) said: "Indeed God is of greater mercy than that He should coerce His creatures into sin and then punish them for that; and God is of greater might than that He should will something and it should fail to happen." They were asked, "Is there any third position between absolute predestination (jabr) and absolute freedom (qadar)?" They said: "Yes, vaster than the space between the heaven and the earth."

> ...Muhammad ibn 'Ajun says: "I asked Abu 'Abd Allah (A), 'Has God left men free [to do what they may like]?' He replied, 'God is nobler than that He should leave it upto them [to do whatever they may like].' I said, 'Then God has imposed their deeds upon them?' He said, 'God is more just than that He should coerce a creature into committing some act and then punish him on its account.'

> Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Washsha' says, "I asked al-Imam al-Rida (A) whether God has given men total freedom in their acts. He said, 'God is mightier than that.' I said, 'Then, has He coerced them into sins?' He replied, 'God is more just and wiser than that He should do such a thing.' Then he added, 'God, the Almighty, has said, "O son of Adam! I deserve more credit in your virtues than yourself, and you deserve more discredit for your sins than I; you commit sins with the power I have given you."'"

> ...Al-Mufaddal ibn 'Umar reports that al-Imam Abu 'Abd Allah (al-Sadiq) (A) said, "Neither total predetermination (jabr), nor total freedom (tafwid), but a position intermediate between the two (amr bayna amrayn)." I said, "What is amr bayna amrayn?" He replied, "It is as if you see someone committing a sin. You stop him, but he does not desist. So you leave him alone. Then if he commits that sin, it does not mean that since he did not heed you and you left him alone, you asked him to commit it."."

See also Murtada Mutahhari, Insan wa sarnewisht (Man and Destiny), for an elaborate

discussion of this point.

[12]. Translator's Note: Some historians have advanced the theory of a connection between Mu'tazilite theology and the 'Abbasid movement. H.S. Nyberg, in his article on the Mu'tazilah in the Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, after remarking that "Wasil adopted a somewhat ambiguous attitude regarding 'Uthman and his murderers and that he left undecided the question of knowing who had the superior claim to caliphate, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, or 'Ali,"says that, "All these apparently dissimilar lines converge on a common centre: the 'Abbasid movement. It is precisely Wasil's attitude which we must regard as characteristic of the partisans of the 'Abbasids...Every thing leads us to believe that the theology of Wasil and the early Mu'tazilah represents the official theology of the 'Abbasid movement. This gives us an unforced explanation of the fact that it was the official doctrine of the 'Abbasid court for at least a century. It seems even probable that Wasil and his disciples took part in the 'Abbasid propaganda...." Although Nyberg's conjecture is not sufficient to establish this hypothesis, further research may bring into light some conclusive evidence in the matter.

[13]. Translator's Note: Akhbarism is a movement which started within the Shi'i world about four hundred years ago. Its originator was Mulla Muhammad Amin ibn Muhammad Sharif al-'Astarabadi (d. 1033/1623-24). He openly attacked the Shi'ah mujtahidun in his work al-Fawa'id al-madaniyyah, vehemently contesting the Usuliyyun's claim that reason is one of the sources of fiqh. The Uuliyyun hold the Qur'an, the Sunnah, reason, and ijma' (consensus) as valid sources for deduction of the rules of the Shari'ah. The Akhbaris accepted the validity only of the Sunnah and rejected the rest. Understanding the Qur'an, they claimed, is beyond the capacity of a commoner, being restricted exclusively to the Ahl al-Bayt (A).

Regarding ijma', they said that it was an innovation (bid'ah) of the Ahl al-Sunnah. Reason, they held, is only valid in empirical sciences. Its applicability cannot be extended to the realm of the Shari'ah. Accordingly, they rejected ijtihad, considering the taqlid (following the authority, imitation in legal matters) of a non-Ma'sum as forbidden. However, they considered the reliability of all the ahadith of the four books, viz. al-Kafi, al-Tahdhib, al-'Istibsar, and Man la yahduruhu al-faqih as being authentic and undisputable. They held that it was the duty of the people to directly refer to the hadith texts in order to discover the commands of the Shari'ah. There was no need of the mujtahid as an intermediary. The Usuliyyun, and in particular such scholars as Aqa Muhammad Baqir al-Bahbahani (1118/1706-1205/1788) and Shaykh Murtada al-Ansari (d 1281/1865-66) refuted the Akhbari position and effectively repulsed the threat posed by them to the Shi'i institution of ijtihad. Some prominent Akhbaris among Shi'ah scholars were Sayyid Ni'mat Allah al-Jaza'iri (d.1050/1640) Muhammad ibn Murtada Mulla Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani (d 1091/1680) Shaykh Yusuf ibn Ahmad al Bahrani al Ha'iri (1107/1695-1186/1772) and Sadr al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad Baqir al-Hamadani (d. after 1151/1738-39)

[14]. This treatise has been published as an appendix to his al-Lum'ah, and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Badawi has included it in the first volume of Madhahib al-'Islamiyyin, pp.15-26.

[15]. See Muhammad Abu Zuhrah, Ibn Taymiyyah.

[16]. Murtada Mutahhari, Ashna'i bi 'ulum-e Islami (An Introduction to the Islamic Sciences), see the section on philosophy, the fourth lecture entitled "Rawishha-ye fikri-ye Islami".

[17]. Al-Qur'an, 2:285.

[18]. This is the stand on sifat which is usually attributed to the Mu'tazilah. Hajji Sabzawari (in Manzumah, his philosophical poem) says:

> al-Ash'ari bizdiyadin qa'iluhu
> wa qala binniyabati'lMu'tazilahu

However some Mu'tazilah, such as al-Hudhayl, have held a position exactly similar to the Shi'ah position.

[19]. Murtada Mutahhari, 'Adle Ilahi (Divine Justice).

[20]. Ibid., the discussion on shafa'ah.

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Islam and the Modern Age

Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Translated by Mahliqa Qara'i

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The Way of Nature

In view of the present state of marvellous rate of progress, can one really believe that Islam can cater to the needs of the modern world? Today, when man, by the means of his power of reason, is conquering the planets and is able to journey far out into the depths of space, is it not time for us to discard such ancient dogmas and concentrate our vision and will on the pursuit of our magnificent victories, pursuing the modern sophisticated way of life?

Before answering these questions, I consider it essential to mention this point first: It is true that we human beings naturally prefer the new to the old. We always give priority to the new model of something over its older forms. But this generalisation cannot be applied to all situations and practices. As we can never say that since the well-known formula 2x2=4, has been used by mankind for thousands of years, it has become obsolete and thus needs to be discarded; or, as we cannot say that the system of forming social life has become old and out-dated, it has to be cast away and a new style of individual living should be established; or, we cannot propose that the civil codes unnecessarily restrict and hamper individual freedom and have become ancient as well, and as these laws fetter the human being, and that too in an age when he is conquering the vastness of space by launching spacecraft into the orbits of different planets in order to discover the secrets of the universe, so new vistas should be opened for him and he should be liberated from the shackles of law and the clutches of those assigned to enforce it. It would all seem to be ludicrous, since notions such as 'old' and 'new' make sense only when used in the context of variable, transitory objects which can lose their freshness and lustre under the destructive influence of time and change. Consequently, while we are engaged in a serious discussion which is based upon a realistic approach, and concerned with the laws of nature and the system of creation (one of these issues is whether Islam can satisfy the human demands in view of present conditions), we should not give much significance to such rhetorical distinctions between old and new. Such distinctions, of course, have their proper place and occasion, which is certainly not the context of this discussion.

The question as to whether or not Islam can administer the needs of humanity in the present

circumstances is itself a strange one. Its incongruity becomes more apparent when it is put in the context of the real meaning of Islam on which the Qur'anic invitation is based; since Islam is the path which acquaints humanity with the system of creation of universe. Islam provides such laws for mankind as are in conformity with human nature and are in complete harmony with the really natural instinctive human needs-though not such "needs" as are conceived by imagination and caprice. It is evident that the human nature is the same and will be the same as long as human beings exist, irrespective of place and time or their way of life. Nature has laid before them a path, which they may either accept or refuse to tread.

On this basis, the above-mentioned question may be put thus: if human beings act according to the path indicated by nature, is there any guarantee of their attaining the happiness and bliss as demanded by their nature?

Islam is the path of nature and, therefore, is the eternal and unchanging path for mankind to follow. Its unchangeable laws affirm man's legitimate, natural and physical desires, and guide him towards the ultimate abode of his happiness and bliss. The Qur'an says:

So set thy face to the religion, as a man of pure faith-God's nature upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion ... (30:30)

We know that there are different types of living organisms throughout the world of creation. Each one of them has a specified term of life and a specific course of development. Their well-being and happiness depend upon their capacity to resist and combat the harmful and destructive elements which confront them in their brief period of survival. It means that living organisms can reach their goal and select the path of survival by utilising various resources incorporated within their structure without much trouble.

During its biological course of development, the wheat grain has to pass through definite stages to obtain its ultimate growth. Its constituent parts and biological mechanisms by reacting to specific environmental conditions and by absorbing certain specific elements in definite proportions essential for its growth and development, guide it towards its ultimate goal of maturity. The wheat seedling never alters its particular natural mode of growth and development that it has adopted. It can never be that a wheat plant, after a certain stage of development, may suddenly alter its course to adopt that of an apple-tree and start sending out branches, leaves and blossoms. Neither does it suddenly alter its course to that of a sparrow and starts growing feathers and a beak and begins fluttering its wings for flight. This is a general and universal law prevailing in every sphere of life. Human beings are also not exempt from it. In their natural course of life, human beings, also, have to pass through certain fixed and inherent stages to reach the goal of perfection and attain their summum bonum. Their constitution is so designed that with the help of the available and suitable means and resources, they can reach ultimate maturity.

Regarding this characteristic of general natural guidance, the Qur'an says:

Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation, then guided it. (20:50)

Describing the presence of guidance in mankind, it says:

By the soul, and That which shaped it and inspired it [with the capacity to distinguish between] lewdness and God-fearing, prosperous is he who purifies it, and failed has he who seduces it. (91:7-10)

It should be quite obvious that the real path of human life which leads human beings towards true happiness is actually that path which is pointed out by nature. It is meant for their real gain and success, and it corresponds with the laws of creation of man and the universe. This path may or may not be according to the sentiments and emotional preferences of individuals; rather their feelings and urges themselves need to follow nature and fall into harmony with it. A human society, likewise, should be established on the firm foundations of realism and not on the weak and shaky grounds of false and fake ideals.

It is here that the difference between Islamic laws and other civil codes lies. Ordinary social laws are legislated according to the wishes of the majority of individuals in the society (i.e. 50 percent +1), whereas Islamic laws have been formulated according to the dictates of nature and instinct, which represent the Divine Will. Hence, the Holy Qur'an reserves the right to legislate solely for God. It says:

Sovereignty solely belongs to God ... (12:40) Who is better in judgement than God, for those who are certain in belief? (5:50)

Whatever generally goes on in an ordinary human society is either according to the intentions of the majority of individuals, or according to the dictates of a powerful despot, regardless of whether they are in conformity with the principles of justice and the real interests of the community or not. But in a true Islamic society, authority belongs to truth and justice and individual interests are subordinated to it.

The other misunderstanding that needs clarification is the notion that Islam is not congenial to the social spirit of the modern-day human societies, which are enjoying every kind of freedom and prosperity and are not in a position to subject themselves to the kind, of restrictions that exist in Islam.

Of course, with the present state of prevalence of moral degeneration in all walks of human life, and all sorts of corrupt and unjust practices that are debasing human societies, endangering their very existence, we find very little affinity between the Islamic spirit and today's unfortunate, deviated humanity. To be certain, while still retaining the status quo, we

cannot hope that a partial application of Islam can effectively save humanity. It would be like expecting benefits of democracy from a dictatorial regime with a democratic label attached to its name.

But if we take into consideration the instinctive human nature and Islam-which is itself a manifestation of nature-we can hope to find a complete harmony and compatibility between the two. How is it possible that no such harmony should exist between the two?

Of course, as a result of prevailing perversions and distorted vision, which are the outcome of an extravagant attitude on the part of the recent generations, there has taken place a severance of ties between the two. However, the wisest way of overcoming these adverse conditions is to launch a war to combat them, so that the grounds may be prepared for a reunion. We should not be disappointed if the people have deviated from the path of nature. We must be hopeful regarding human potentialities. History bears witness as to how every new movement or regime has to confront the resistance offered by representatives of the old forces of the previous times. It is only after a prolonged tug-of-war and occasionally a bloody conflict that they can open a road in the society for themselves and obliterate the memory of the rival system from. minds of the people.

Democracy itself, which has been regarded as the most successful alternative by its followers and was established through popular support for the most part, has been established after bloody clashes. The French Revolution and other such revolutions were brought about in this manner. The communist regimes, which according to the Marxists are the most "progressive" of human political systems and the "most magnificent" gift of history, were established through a bloodbath of millions of people. Russia, and afterwards many Asian, European and Latin American countries, present this type of picture.

Accordingly, the resentment initially exhibited in a society does not prove the unsoundness and instability of any proposed social system. Islam is alive by all means and it has the full capacity of being implemented in today's society.

Now, I shall go ahead to further elaborate this subject and analyse it.

Islam and the Genuine Needs of Every Epoch

The significance and value of every scientific idea depend upon its practical value in life. The most primitive and simple idea like the drinking of water, and the eating of food, occupies an important place in human existence; that. is, not withstanding its simplicity it is as vital as life itself. Another idea that apparently seems to be very simple and trivial is the idea of the necessity of social and collective life; it has the same importance in human history as human civilisation itself. It is this idea that co-ordinates, every second, millions of human acts with one another and produces every day billions of desirable and undesirable effects. Evidently,

the question whether or not a religion like Islam can cater to all human needs in every age is of such paramount significance that nothing more important can possibly be conceived.

Almost every Muslim individual is acquainted with at least some of the Islamic laws. Like other religious intellectual material that Islam has produced, this conceptual inventory has been stored in the minds of its followers for century after century. If has been transferred from one generation to the next as a religious heritage. However. like other religious relics, this heritage has lain idle in the minds of individuals without being subject to proper use, inquiry and scrutiny.

If we Easterners try to recall the history of the times of our ancestors and forefathers, we shall see that for thousands of years the regimes that ruled us never gave us any freedom of thought, especially in scientific or social matters. A ray of hope that shone for a while during the early era of Islam through the efforts of its Messenger and which brought tidings of a distant dawn, was lost in the centuries-long night of oppression by a series of egocentric tyrants. Again we were left in a state of slavery and bondage. We remained tortured and tormented in the infernal, deadly dungeons, repeating our age-old obsequious utterances: 'Yes! Yes Sir! Yes your highness! Yes your royal majesty! "

Whoever was more clever was only able to guard and preserve the religious material in an intact condition storing it for some luckier generations to come. Moreover, the rulers of those times were not indifferent to encouraging such an attitude for preventing open and free discussion of issues in the society. Their only concern was that people should be so busy with their work that they would not leave their cocoons. With the public submerged safely in their own personal errands, the administration of the community was the concern of the rulers and the self named guardians of the society. They were not alarmed at people's interest in the comparatively simple religious material. They only wanted to keep them from free and inquisitive discussions. They considered themselves as the community's active mind.

They had well realised that the most powerful source of strength in social life is the will power of human individuals. and this power was safely harnessed by the rulers by controlling their minds. As a result all their effort was concentrated on the conquest of the public's mind so that they may themselves become the active intellect of the community. These are the facts that anyone who turns to the historical chronicles of the past will uncover without much assiduous study.

Of late, the Western deluge of "freedom", after satiating the Europeans, has now turned towards Eastern lands. Initially it sought admittance to our continent as a guest, then it became an authoritative master in our own house. At first it gave a war cry against dogmatism and intellectual repression. The presence of this partisan of freedom seemed to provide a good opportunity for us to restore our lost dignity and to start a new life of intellectual brilliance and to undertake a belated synthesis of knowledge and action. But sadly, the same European

freedom that delivered us from the clutches of the oppressors took their place to become our "active mind".

We did not know what to do. When we came to our senses, we realised that times had silenced the lords of the olden days and dethroned from the seat of authority the commands of the autocratic sovereigns and aristocrats. We were asked to pay no more heed to what the broken idols spoke but instead to listen to and to imitate what the Europeans said and did.

One thousand years have passed since the soil of Iran embraced the last remains of Ibn Sina. His philosophic and medical books were presented in our libraries and his scientific views were on the tips of our tongues, though without any consequence.

Seven hundred years had passed since the mathematical works and the cultural heritage of Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi were the goal of our lives, though without any result. But following in the footsteps of the Europeans, we joined them in celebrating their one-thousandth and seven-hundredth anniversaries. More than three centuries were past since the philosophical school of Mulla Sadra was followed in Iran and his philosophical ideas were the subject of study. On the other hand, many years had also passed since the Tehran University was established and had opened a faculty of philosophy. But some years back when a conference was held there, one of the Orientalists made some remarks in appreciation of Mulla Sadra, this caused an unprecedented clamour in the university regarding his personality and philosophic thought.

These are a few examples which fully illustrate the state of affairs in our society and the nature of our intellectual temperament. This shows the degree of our intellectual bankruptcy and servility to others.

Such was the condition of the majority of our intellectuals. A few of them, who were successful in retaining their independence of thought and had preserved their intellectual heritage, became the victims of the malady of split-personality. They were infatuated with the ideas of Western thought and at the same time remained loyal to their Eastern intellectual heritage. They strived to bring about a reconciliation between these two opposite poles and to create a state of matrimonial harmony between the unlikely pair.

One of our able writers tried to reconcile the Islamic tradition with the Western tradition of democracy in an article entitled "Islamic Democracy". Another gentleman strove hard to extract the notion of a classless society from Islamic texts, under the title of "Islamic Communism"!

Isn't that strange? One should ask them: if the relevance and validity of Islam should conditionally depend upon its affinity to the "vital principles" of democracy or communism, when the same democracy and communism with their all pomp and pageantry have come to

us on their own, what is the necessity of taking such great pains in trying to produce a compromise between them and a handful of out-dated fourteen-centuries-old notions?

If Islam is an independent and living entity by itself, what is the need to compromise its natural grace with borrowed artificial adornments in order to invite customers?

During the post Second-World-War years, Western scholars have been enthusiastically discussing and studying various religions and publishing their findings. Imitating them, we also followed the same course and chose certain aspects of our holy religion as the subject of discussion and-debate: Are all religions true? Are the 'heavenly' religions anything more than a series of attempts in social reform? Do these religions have any other aim except purification of the soul and correction of morals? Can religious rites and rituals exist forever in their respective societies? Do religions have any purpose other than the exercise of rites and rituals? Does Islam fulfil the needs of every epoch? etc.

Indeed, a careful scholar, before entering into any controversy, would first verify the validity of questions raised according to certain established scientific criteria and only afterwards he would express his opinion. But the Western thinkers consider religion to be simply a social phenomenon, a result of a series of physical factors, like society itself.

Those Western thinkers who were rather optimistic regarding religion-including Islam-say that it is the mental contrivance of a group of men of genius, who, under the effect of a purified spirit, a rich intellect and an indomitable will, have conceived certain moral laws for the purposes of reforming their societies. These laws have evolved with the gradual development of human societies. They say that the empirical data, as well as historical evidence, provide sufficient proof of the fact that human societies gradually move towards perfection, and every day humanity takes a new step in the direction of civilised living. They cite the results of psychological, legal, sociological and even philosophical discussions, particularly the theory of dialectical materialism, to prove that since human societies do not remain in a static condition, in the same way their enforceable laws also cannot remain unalterable.

They argue that the laws that might have guaranteed the welfare of primitive human beings who ate of the fruits of the jungle and who dwelled in caves, can never be sufficient for the purposes of sophisticated life of modern times. How can the laws that were formulated

when people used to fight with spears and clubs, suffice for a resourceful and cultured age like ours equipped with the most sophisticated nuclear bombs? Could laws belonging to an age when people used to travel on horseback and on mules be of any use to people accustomed to aircraft and nuclear submarines?

It means that the modern world neither accepts, nor should it be expected to accept, the laws

and regulations belonging to the ancient times. Consequently, the laws legislated by societies of the past should be subjected to constant change with respect to the changing conditions of humanity. As a result of change in practical values, moral norms also need to be revised; since morality is no. more than a series of psychological habits that become stable due to repeated performance.

The simple life of two or three thousand years ago did not require the intricate political systems of today. Can the women of modern society lead a life of chastity similar to the veiled ladies of the past? Even the labourers and peasants and other toiling classes of today's world could not be expected to possess the patience and endurance of the toilers of past ages? The agitated revolutionary minds, living in an age of the conquest of space, could not be expected to be terrified by lunar and solar eclipses or black winds and made to resign and submit to the Will of God?

It means that human societies, in every age, desire law and morality to be according to the temper of that age.

The Islamic Approach to Law

Islam, on the other hand, with a specific series of laws, claims to guarantee, to perfection, the satisfaction of the needs and happiness of human society. In fact, "Islam" is the name of such a method and system of regulations.

It is evident that such an approach and a system of such laws is called upon to modulate its approach with the needs of every age. One of the modulated instances of this system was the practice of the Holy Prophet of Islam (S) and the set of laws that he implemented in his time.

In other epochs, as well, the modulated application of Islam should also imply the best and purest approach to life that can effectively forward the interests of human society of that age. This clarifies the point that the answer to the question raised by a Western scholar about the capacity of Islam to cater to the changing needs of every epoch-in view of the fact that his question is based on a valid scientific basis-is positive. However, as explained, he views Islam as a fixed system of Divine doctrines, which, despite their permanence, claim to guarantee the satisfaction of the needs of every epoch.

In any case, we should examine whether or not the Holy Qur'an, which is the revealed Book of Islam, and the best interpreter of the ends of this Divine religion, interprets the meaning of 'prophethood' and 'religion' on the basis of social, psychological, philosophical and material grounds which call for a separate set of laws corresponding with the ethos of every age; or does it lay down a set of permanent unchangeable laws and fixed moral norms and obligations for mankind of all ages; and if the latter is in reality the Qur'anic viewpoint, how does it justify its claim to satisfy the needs of every epoch?

Does the Qur'an desire that human societies should gradually reach a fixed static condition, and that all the doors of progress should be closed to human civilization? Does the Qur'an want all sorts of developmental and progressive human activities to be brought to a permanent halt? And how does it meet the challenge of a fluid Nature and an ever-changing system of the cosmos, of which man and his society are a part?

What is certain is that the Qur'an explicates the position of the revealed religion as originating from the hidden world ('alam al-ghayb). It links its message to the total system of creation and the perpetually changing universe. At the same time it explicitly states the fixity, unchangeableness and permanence of the constituents of religion. The Qur'an interprets the merits, happiness or misfortune of an individual or a society in a way which differs from the outlook of a Western scholar. These issues, when examined from the eyes of the Qur'an take an appearance quite different from what they seem when perceived through the spectacles of materialistic discussions.

The Qur'an regards the Islamic law and the Islamic approach as a series of principles that guide the system of creation and in particular the human society with its continuously changing and evolving nature which is itself a part and parcel of the world of nature. In other words, the Qur'an considers Islam to be a series of principles that are in complete harmony with the laws of creation, and hence these laws are as unchangeable as nature itself. These laws embody truth; they are not subservient to the desires and whims of any person, like the laws and statutes of countries with despotic and dictatorial regimes, nor like the laws of democratic countries which are subject to the wishes of the majority. Islamic laws have been legislated in harmony with the system of creation of the universe, and are wholly dependent upon the Will o the God of the universe.

How does Islam Satisfy the Demands of Every Epoch?

In the discussions about society this point has amply been stressed that it was on account of the necessities of life and due to an individual's inability to cope with its demands all alone, that the human being chose to lead a social existence. Similarly, we often hear in juridical discussions that a society can genuinely satisfy the vital needs of its individual members only when it formulates a set of laws and regulations that correspond with their needs, so that each member of society can obtain his genuine rights and benefit from the fruits of collective existence.

In the light of these two notions, the principal basis of social laws is satisfaction of the basic needs of human life, without which a human being cannot, even for a moment, continue its existence. It is this fulfilment of basic needs that directly results in the formation of a society and formulation of laws and regulations. Evidently, a society in which there is no collective effort for the fulfilment of basic needs, and where there is no interrelationship of activities

among members, such a group does not deserve to be called a 'society'. In the same way, laws and regulations whose existence and implementation has no effect on fulfilment of the social needs of the people, are not worthy to be called 'laws', that is, a set of regulations that safeguard vital social interests. The presence of laws which more or less satisfy the needs of society and which are, on the whole, acceptable to its members, is necessary even for the most barbarous and backward societies. However, in primitive societies the laws and regulations are products of custom and tradition, having gradually emerged from the irregular collective behaviour of the past. At times, in such societies, laws are imposed upon the people through the extravagant will of one or more powerful individuals, resulting in the establishment of a well-defined base for the mainstream of social life acceptable to the majority. Even today we see such people in various corners of the world who conserve their customs, culture and traditions without losing the fabric of social life.

In an advanced society, if it is a religious one, the Divine Law prevails. If it is a secular society, the laws legislated through popular consent, exercised directly or indirectly, are implemented. No society exists, nor can exist, where the members are not bound to certain laws, obligations and duties.

How to Determine these needs?

It is obvious that the main reason responsible for the legislation of laws and regulations is to meet the social needs of human life. But the question arises: What are these needs? How should they be determined?

These requirements should be, of course, directly or indirectly, susceptible to determination by man, however sketchy and general that determination may be. By the way, we are also confronted with the question whether or not the human being can occasionally make errors in determining his duties and his means of attaining happiness. Are we to accept his estimations and judgements at their face-value?

The majority of people in the so-called progressive world of ours consider human will and wish as the genuine and sufficient basis for legislation of laws. But since it is impossible that all individuals belonging to a nation should think in a similar manner, the consensus of the majority (i.e. 50 percent +1) is, unavoidably, regarded as decisive. The opinions of the minority (i.e. 50 percent -1) are ignored out of necessity, and it is deprived of any freedom of action altogether.

It cannot, however, be denied that human resolution and will is directly related to conditions of life. A wealthy person who is provided with all necessities of life, cherishes a great number of fanciful desires that would never occur to the mind of a pauper. A hungry person who suffers from extreme hunger and who has lost his control, only longs for food; whether it is delicious or not, whether it belongs to him or others, does not matter to him. But an affluent

person may be indifferent even when the most delicious foods are laid out on the table before him. During the times of prosperity, human beings conceive of more fancies than during hard times.

In this way, the pattern of needs changes because of civil progress; while the previous needs of people are satisfied with the march of civilization new needs are generated which replace the old ones. With this change in conditions, people outgrow certain laws and need new laws or demand amendment of the old ones. In this way, among the living nations of the world, new laws always replace worn-out laws. As mentioned, it is the will and support of the majority of members of every nation which gives validity to the laws and stamps them with the seal of authority, even though the legislation may not ;)e in the interest of the society.

For example, a Frenchman by virtue of his French origin, is a member of the French society and whose will and opinion is honoured if it coincides with that of the majority. The French laws are designed to fashion him as a twentieth-century Frenchman; not like a contemporary Englishman nor as a tenth-century Frenchman. Nevertheless, are there not any constant factors in the varying patterns of human needs which change with the march of civilization? Aren't there any common factors among human societies that have existed in various epochs of history? Has the basic substratum of humanness, to which a series of natural needs of life are related, undergone an irreversible, though gradual, change? Have our human ancestors of distant past been physiologically different from us? Did incidents such as war and blood-shed, or times of peace and harmony, have any significance other than what they mean to us today? Did the effect of wine and nature of intoxication in the past have a quality different from what it is today? Did the musical compositions of the past impart different types of pleasure than they give today? In short, was the external and internal structure of the human beings of the past different from that of present-day mankind? Obviously, the answers to all these questions are in the negative.

We cannot say that humanity has gradually metamorphosed into something other than what it was in the past. We, also, cannot say that the essence of humanness-which is the common factor between the white race and the black, between the wise as well as the fools, between the young and the old, between the people living in the tropics and those living in the polar zones, and between the peoples of the past and the present has changed with respect to the pattern of common needs.

There are, definitely, certain needs which require a series of fixed and permanent rules and regulations that have nothing to do with the rules that are subject to alteration and change. There is no nation in the world which would not choose to wage a war whenever its existence is decisively threatened by an enemy, and when the enemy cannot be repelled except through blood-shed, would not go for it. There is no nation, for example, which would prohibit people from eating food or ban sexual association altogether. Many such examples can be given, and they all prove the necessity for unchangeable laws which are independent of laws subject to change. The above statement throws light on certain issues:

1. The main reason responsible for emergence of society, social laws and legislation, are the needs of life.

2. All nations of the world, even the barbarous ones, have their own laws and regulations.

3. The means of determining the needs of life, from the modern point of view, is through the will of the majority of the members of society.

4. The will of the majority is not always in accordance with reality and truth.

5. There is a class of laws that are subject to alteration with the passage of time; since they are related to specific conditions and circumstances. But there is another class of laws that are related to mankind's ' human essence", which is a common factor among all human beings of all times, in all parts of the world and in all circumstances and environments. These laws are unchangeable, enduring and fixed.

Now that these issues have been clarified, let us see what the Islamic viewpoint is:

What is the Islamic Point of View?

Islam is a system of universal laws which haven't been formulated for any specific group of people or for a specific period of time. In its teachings, its focus is on the ' natural man"; that is. its attention is centred upon the natural structure of the human being and the conditions of a common individual, whether he is poor or rich, strong or weak, black or white, an Arab or a non-Arab, male or female, old or young, wise or foolish. the "natural man", is a human being who carries the primordial, God-given nature along with a pure consciousness and a will untainted by illusions or deviations. This is what we call a 'natural man". It cannot be denied that the distinguishing characteristic which discerns the human being from other animals, lies in his intellect; whereas other animals do not enjoy this gift of God.

All activities of all living organisms, except the human being, are subservient to the dictates of their instincts. These animal instincts guide and motivate them towards satisfaction of their vital needs.

Human beings are the only animals who, besides the drives motivated by diverse instincts, feelings and emotions-like love and hatred, friendship and enmity, hope and depression-are equipped with the faculty of judgement, which can decide between conflicting emotions and forces and select a right course of action despite obstinate opposition by emotion and passion. Sometimes this faculty decides against an action despite the pressure of instinct and emotion; at other times it recommends an action despite unwillingness of instinct and passion. Yet at

other times, when the overall interests of the human being coincide with the demands of instinct and emotion, it ratifies their demand.

The Basis of Islamic Outlook

Since the education and training of every species of beings should be based on cultivation and development of its distinguishing characteristics, Islam has based its teachings on the firm basis of intellectual faculty of man, not on the unstable foundations of feelings and passions. This is the basis of the Islamic invitation composed of certain sublime beliefs, higher morals and practical laws, whose truth and veracity is confirmed by the human being's primordial nature, in con junction with its God-given intellect free of illusions and deviations.

The "Natural Man"

Man, in the state of pure nature, perceives through his God-given primordial nature that the vast realm of the universe, from the minutest particle to the greatest galaxies with their wonderful system of precise laws, points to its origin from the One God. He clearly perceives that all things have come into existence by His act of creation; their functioning, their working - everything that followed their creation - are of His making.

The "natural man' perceives that this world of existence, with all its scattered fragments, is itself a huge unified whole in which all parts are interrelated with one another. Everything is linked with other things, and a perfect harmony and unity prevails amongst them.

The human world is just an insignificant fraction of the great cosmos, an insignificant drop in the vast and infinite sea; but it is a phenomenon in whose emergence the whole of universe had a share. It is a product of the whole universe, which is a creation of the Divine Will.

Since the human being is the offspring of the world of creation and he lives and flourishes under its leadership and guidance, it is the system of the creation which, by employing myriad of means that are outside human reach and power, has created the human being in its present form, and has provided it with awareness, perception, faculties of reason, intellectual and emotional capabilities and other external and internal features. Through these means it has guided his consciousness and will towards the goal of his real felicity, his summum bonum.

The human being is the only creature which can distinguish between good and evil, between loss and profit, through its consciousness and free will. He is, therefore, a free being. However, it should not be forgotten that the world of creation is the same as the Will of God of the universe, Who has carved out all those internal and external patterns in man's being, making him a free being.

The natural man, with his thought and intellect, unmistakably perceives that his felicity, happiness and his true goal in life is the same as the destination determined for him by the world of creation which has created and fostered him. It is the world of creation that directs the human being towards the ultimate goal and purpose which has been determined and ordained for him by the One God, Who has originated all being and existence.

On this basis, the "natural" human being would make the judgement that the only road to his felicity in life lies in aligning his own being with the system of creation, considering himself to be an inseparable part of it. His judgement would be that he can neither afford to neglect his own situation in the perspective of existence, nor can he afford to overlook the duties assigned to him in the book of creation.

The essence of the innumerable duties laid down for him in the book of creation is that the human being should never humble himself and prostrate himself before anything other than the One God, and that all his acts and deeds motivated by his natural emotions and instincts must be performed under the surveillance of reason and on condition of its approval.

Fixed and Variable Laws

Laws are divisible into two distinct kinds:

1. Those laws and regulations that protect vital human interests (taking into consideration the fact that people lead a collective existence, regardless of its specific mode in every region and period).

This class of laws pertains, for example, to a section of beliefs and principles which concretise human devotion and humility towards the Creator (wherein there is no possibility of change and alteration), and those general laws pertaining to the general aspects of human life, such as food, housing, marriage, defence etc., which are a permanent feature of man's social existence.

2. Those laws and regulations which have a temporal, regional or some other special aspect and change their form with variation in modes of living. This class of laws are subject to variation in

accordance with gradual cultural advancements and changes in the social scene, and need revision with abolition of old customs and methods and emergence of new ones. For example, in the days when people used to travel on foot or on horse-back from one point to another, very simple laws were sufficient for the purpose of traffic control. But today with progress in the means of transportation, we are in need of a variety of complex laws for control of marine, land and air traffic.

The primitive man, who had a very simple way of life and only handled simple and primary raw materials, needed simple laws to fulfil his elementary needs of life, like food, clothing and shelter, although he spent most of his waking hours in tedious labour. In the modern world, where life is as fast as electricity, tremendous diversity of jobs and professions has emerged due to the variety of work. This division of work into thousands of professions has resulted in legislation of thousands of regulations, to which several more are added every day.

Islam, which focuses its educative attention on the "natural" human being and which, through its invitation, leads human society towards piety, virtue and purity of belief, action and purpose, bases its programme on this unpolluted purity of the intellect of the "natural" human being. Consequently, it has divided human laws and regulations into two classes: the first class of laws that are fixed, being based on the primordial nature of man and the characteristics peculiar to his species. This class of laws is named "Islamic Shari'ah". They guide humanity towards the goal of its highest felicity:

So set thy face with sincerity to the Religion-God's nature upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion ... (30:30)

Secondly, it should be noted that determination of the second class of laws, which are alterable and can be modulated according to the changing conditions of place and time, has been assigned to the institution of al-wilayahal-'ammah (general guardianship), and are subject to the opinion of the Prophet of Islam (S), his successors (A), and those appointed by him. These laws and regulations are formulated by al-wilayah, in the light of the permanent religious laws, in accordance with spatial and temporal requirements, and counted as part of the Divine law, the Shari'ah, and are not considered a part of "al-Din":

O believers, obey God, and obey the Messenger, and those in authority among you. (4:59)

This is, in brief, the reply that Islam gives in regard to the question of satisfaction of the real needs of every age. This problem needs a more elaborate explanation and a deeper inquiry. This we shall take up in the next section.

Constant and Variable Laws in Islam

In the previous section we came to know that Islam has divided its laws into two groups: the fixed and the variable laws.

The fixed laws are such as have been formulated with a view to human nature, i.e. the universal human nature, which is common to civilised or uncivilised, white or black, sturdy or weak, persons of every region, and every age. Since all human beings are created with the same human structure, with similar types of internal and external faculties and organs,

whenever two or more human beings come in contact with one another and try to co-operate with one another to form a companionship to be distinguished as a social entity, and since they inevitably face the same kinds of problems when they try to solve them with their joint efforts, this commonness of various factors in their makeup and needs necessitates a series of uniform regulations applicable to all individuals in the group.

The faculties of intellectual comprehension are of the same kind in all human beings. Their rational judgements, as long as illusions and superstitions do not intervene in their reasoning, are also similar. Their mental and critical faculties need to be satisfied through a similar kind of testimony. Similarly, various feelings, like love and hatred, hope and fear, needs for food, clothes, shelter and sexual association, exist among all human individuals and need to be gratified in a similar manner for every individual. On account of this common human nature, it cannot be said that the satisfaction of hunger is permissible for one person and prohibited ? or another. Nor it may be said, while one person must submit to the judgements of his reason, another should completely ignore the dictates of this conscience.

Moreover, it can't be said that human nature, despite its age-old association with emotions, faculties and consciousness peculiar to it, should dissociate for a period with its consciousness or totally negate it for all time. Can one suggest that mankind should lead collective life in one period and adopt individual living at; other times, or that one should defend himself at one time but surrender unconditionally to his enemies at other times, or that one should engage in work and activity at some times and choose a life of idleness and sloth at other times?

This makes it obvious that human society, by nature, requires a series of fixed and uniform laws.

Through its religious message, Islam has endeavoured to convey nothing but this point. It says that nothing except a series of such laws and regulations as are in conformity with the general system of creation and the particular makeup of mankind, can fulfil the vital needs of human existence.

It asks man to turn to his God-given conscience and consciousness, to prevent every kind of sensuality, caprice, impropriety and waywardness from influencing his judgements, and follow whatever has been determined to be right and truthful. We should neither label the following of a series of truths as "imitation", nor should we imitate our ancestors blindly in the name of "national pride" or "age-old national customs and traditions". We should neither label godliness and realisation of truth as "conservatism," nor surrender ourselves to a group of sensualists in power, becoming the instrument of their whims, and, as a result, sell ourselves into the worship of hundreds of man-made "gods". "Islam" (lit. submission) is the name of this religion, basically because it invites man to the sole worship of the One Creator of the universe and calls for his submission to the truth. This invitation, in its elaborate form,

consists of a series of beliefs, morals and laws, put forth as fixed obligatory duties before mankind.

It may be pointed out that the elements of all the three aspects of religion-that is belief, morals and laws-are perfectly interrelated with one another as well as with the great system of creation. However, an elaborate discussion of these wonderful interrelationships and the perfect harmony, coherence and unity between various aspects of Islamic teachings is outside the scope of our present discussion. Here our main aim is to prove that Islam possesses a series of fixed laws.

Alterable Laws in Islam

Just as human beings require a series of fixed and constant laws for the purpose of regulating their permanent and homogeneous natural needs, in the same way they also require a number of changeable and variable laws without which human societies cannot carry on their stable existence. Evidently, while the "natural " life of all human beings is almost the same because of their permanent and homogeneous structure, their temporal and spatial requirements are constantly subject to evolutionary and revolutionary changes. As the conditions and circumstances of human societies gradually change, they transform themselves in order to adjust to changing conditions, thus giving rise to the necessity for bringing about certain changes in prevailing laws. It is in the context of such laws and regulations that Islam recognises the necessity of a principle. On account of this, the guardian of the Law (the wali) has been authorised to make necessary changes in various periods and for people of different regions, when he considers it to be necessary. This can be done without subjecting the permanent laws to change, while satisfying the demands of human society.

Clarification of this Viewpoint

In the same manner as a member of an Islamic society is free to spend his income in whatever way he likes (of course, within the limits of the Law and in accordance with the criteria of God-fearing and piety; i.e. he is free to make use of his property in any manner he chooses, to expand or restrict, to increase or reduce the level and scope of his lifestyle, to defend and recover his rights and property or to waive or relinquish them if he chooses, to adopt any profession and work he chooses and the hours and frequency of such work and activity), so also the wali of Muslims, in the position of the caretaker of the affairs of Muslims, whose authority is sanctioned by Islam, by virtue of his wilayah over a region, presides over their social affairs; he represents the social will and consciousness, and is free to exercise his discretion in social affairs, like an individual in affairs of his own life.

He is authorised, in the light of fixed religious laws and with due observance of taqwa (God-fearing), to legislate laws in such matters as related to roadways, transport, housing, commerce etc. He can resolve on a war of defence, and, when necessary, order the

mobilisation of the army; or, if he decides that armed defence is not in the interests of the Muslim society, order for conclusion of hostilities through negotiation, settlement and conclusion of suitable treaties.

He can, for example, implement a programme for cultural development related to religious or other affairs, and launch large-scale operations; or, if he deems fit, withdraw certain programmes in some fields and advance others in their stead.

In short, all those new regulations that can be beneficial in the progress of the social life of a society and are to the interest of Islam and the Muslim community, come under the authority of the wali al'amr. There is no restriction whatsoever in their legislation and execution. However, although such laws are compulsorily enforceable, and obedience to the wali al-'amr is obligatory, at the same time, these laws are not considered a part of the Shari'ah, or Divine Law. The juristic bases of such laws are the demands of conditions and circumstances, which call for their formulation. Accordingly, as soon as the grounds for their legislation disappear, their validity also ceases. In such a case, it becomes the duty of the present wali al-'amr to proclaim among the people the abolition of the old law and enforcement of a new valid law.

But the Divine commands that constitute the Shari'ah are permanent and everlasting; not even the wali al-'amr has any authority to bring about any change in them in the name of appearance of a necessity, or abrogate them in name of its disappearance.

Clarification of Certain Doubts

This brief explanation regarding the permanent and the alterable laws in Islam is sufficient to prove the baselessness of any charges against it.

Some say that the magnitude of the present social life cannot in anyway be compared with the life of fourteen centuries ago. The laws and regulations dealing with today's system of traffic and transportation alone are more numerous and of a wider range than the total number of laws prevalent during the days of the Prophet (S). Many of the laws that exist today were not necessary to be legislated then. This is the reason why the Islamic Shari'ah which does not contain such regulations, has become irrelevant for the present-day world.

These gentlemen, of course, do not possess sufficient information regarding the Islamic Law and are entirely ignorant of variable laws sanctioned by Islam. They imagine that Islam, being a chain of fixed and static laws, tries to administer an ever-changing and developing world by their means. In other words, Islam, armed with an ancient sword has risen to fight the undefeatable system of creation; it desires to harness inevitable changes in human culture and to stop the march of time! Others have said that inevitable social evolution and change require an alteration and gradual change even in 'fixed' laws; therefore, the fixed laws of Islam, if their utility and strength be admitted, were good for implementation only during the times of

the Prophet (S), not in all ages.

These gentlemen have not attentively pursued their legal studies. They have failed to realise that in all civil codes prevalent in the world, there is always certain material which is not subject to change. It cannot be denied that the laws and regulations in the past were different from what they are today, and will, in general, differ from the laws of future, too. Nevertheless, there will remain certain common aspects in all law codes that shall never become obsolete and outmoded. In any case, as I have already mentioned in the previous part of our discussion, the process of legislation in Islam, whether it is derived from Divine Revelation-as in the case of fixed laws-or based on counsel (shura) and al-wilayah-as in the case of changeable laws-is exclusively based on reason and rationality, not on the emotional inclinations and irrational prejudices of the majority. However, in spite of it, the Islamic approach to law-giving cannot be compared with the mode of government in social regimes; Islam possesses a set of permanent laws, the Divine Shari'ah, whose alteration is beyond the powers of the guardians of the Muslim community (awliya' al-umur). The general Law of the Shari'ah is obligatory under all conditions and circumstances; only the particular laws are alterable, on account of the necessity to suit the changing and evolving social conditions and to guarantee the fulfilment of changing social needs

Most systems of government have a law called "the constitution;" neither the government, nor the senate, nor the parliament, is authorised to bring about any change and alteration in it. There are other laws that are legislated either by the parliament or legislative council or are a product of deliberations and decisions of cabinet ministers. Only the latter class of laws, on account of their specific, particular applicability, is subject to change and alteration in accordance with changes occurring in a society or a country. As it cannot be expected from the constitution of a country to define, for example, every detail of the traffic rules or make amendments and changes in them every month or every year according to changing requirements, so also the Divine Shari'ah, which occupies the sanctified position of a constitution, should not be expected to contain any amendable elaborate codes. Just as one does not expect the constitution of a country to put all its articles at the disposal of the parliament or government to make changes in them-even those articles which stress the independence of a country and its basic system of government-so also one should not expect that the laws of the Divine Shari'ah, which has the same significance as a constitutional law, be subject to alteration and change.

Thus the first criticism that Islamic laws are imperfect and are based upon such principles that are not relevant today, is proved to be baseless. The second charge, also, according to which laws should be alterable and that Islamic laws are static and fixed, has been refuted.

In this connection, there is another question which arises, and which is a corollary to the second objection: It is true that among the standing laws of a progressive society there is certain material which cannot be abolished in toto, but do the laws of the Islamic Shari'ah guarantee the felicity of human society during all ages and at all times? Can the modern

civilization continue its unabated march through such Islamic practices as salat, saum, hajj and zakat? Can such Islamic laws as those related to slavery, marriage, interest on debt, and other laws, hope to survive without modifications in the present-day world? These questions and others like them need a series of elaborate discussions which call for another time and place.

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Women in a Qur'anic Society

Lois Lamya ' al-F'aruqi Vol I

The topic of this paper was chosen out of the conviction that humanity is suffering today from a number of serious social problems related to women and to the interrelations of the two sexes in society. Although these problems may be more pronounced, disturbing, more debilitating for some of us than for others, there are probably few if any regions of the contemporary world whose citizens have not felt in some way the repercussions of these problems. Therefore, there is a pressing need for exploring possible solutions. The problem of women is linked, for the present study, with the Qur'an, and what I have called the "Qur'anic society," out of strong conviction that the Qur'an offers the most viable suggestions for contemporary social reform which can be found in any model or any literature. Many of you may be puzzled by the title of this paper-"Women in a Qur'anic Society." You may ask yourselves, "Why didn't she say "Women in Muslim Society" or even "Women in an Islamic Society?" Let me explain why the expressions "Muslim" and "Islamic" were rejected for this paper, and how the use of the rather unusual appellation, "Qur'anic society," is justified.

There are at least three reasons for my choice of that title. The first of these derives from the concern that many beliefs and practices have been labelled "Muslim" or "Islamic" without warranting those names. There are approximately 40 nations of the world which claim to have a Muslim majority population and therefore to be exemplary of "Muslim" or "Islamic" societies. This of course results in a great deal of confusion as the question is asked: Which of these regions represents most faithfully the true "Islamic" society? Among Muslims that question is most frequently answered by the claim that their own national or regional society is the truest to the intentions of Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala.

Non-Muslims, on the other hand, and especially the Western anthropologists who travel around the world to investigate the customs and mores of its peoples, tend to treat each variation within the Muslim World as equally valid. This results from their adherence to what I call the "zoo theory" of knowledge. Adherents of that theory regard all Muslims-and of course similar treatment of other non-Western people is discernible-as different species within the human zoo. The "zoo theory" protagonists go to the field, record and snap pictures of every strange or exotic practice they see and hear; and for them, this is Islam or Islamic practice. A trip to another part of the Muslim World with the ubiquitous devices for recording and photographing generates a different body of materials documenting superficial variations in customs. But this, too, is Islam or Islamic practice for the "zoo theory" investigator or

ethnographer. There is far too little effort spent on understanding Islam as a whole. As a result, the basic premise of scepticism and relativism is confirmed in the mind of the researcher; and he/she returns home convinced that there is not one Islam, but scores of Islams existent in the world. In like fashion, the researcher reports that there are many definitions or descriptions of the status and role of women in Muslim society. Each one of the resultant definitions or descriptions is dubbed as "Muslim" or "Islamic" even if we as Muslims may hold some of these practices to be distortions or perversions of our principles and beliefs by the misguided or uninformed among us.

It was partly to avoid confusion with these variant descriptions and misunderstandings that I have chosen the appellation "Qur'anic" for the present discussion. In this way, I hope to move beyond the limited relevance and particularism of a "zoo theory" of investigation to a presentation which avoids such fragmentation and is ideologically in conformance with the true prescriptions of Islam. In regard to matters so determining of our destiny and very existence, we can never be satisfied with mere reportage about certain human animals in the "zoo" who are statistically "Muslim" or whose customs have been labelled as "Islamic." Those designations have sometimes been misapplied. "Qur'anic," on the other hand, is a term which is unequivocal. It points clearly to the topic of this paper.

Secondly, "Qur'anic society" was judged to be the most suitable title for it orients us towards discovering those core principles in the Qur'an itself which form the underlying framework for our societies throughout the Muslim World. It is the society based on Qur'anic principles which is the goal of all of us, even though we may unknowingly deviate from time to time from those principles. It is the conformance to a Qur'an-based society for which we must all work if the Muslim peoples are to enjoy a felicitous future. It is not an Indonesian, Pakistani, Saudi Arabian, Egyptian or Nigerian version of that society that we should regard as indisputable norm, but one firmly based on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Only therein can we find a proper definition of woman's role in society. Since it is these teachings which are the subject of my paper, "Women in a Qur'anic Society" seemed the most proper title.

Thirdly, I wish by this choice of title to emphasize that we should regard the Holy Qur'an as our guide in all aspects of our lives. It is not only the prime source of knowledge about religious beliefs, obligations, and practices, it is also the guide, whether specific or implied, for every aspect of Islamic civilization. In the centuries of past glory, it determined the political, economic, social and artistic creativity of the Muslim peoples. If we are to succeed as members of an Islamic society in the coming decades and centuries, it must again determine our thinking and our actions in an all-inclusive way. Din is not limited to the Five Pillars of the shahadah, salat, siyam, zakat, and the hajj. Din in fact defies simple equation with the English term "religion," for the former's significance penetrates into every nook and cranny of human existence and behaviour. Surely it should be our goal to relate every action to our Din. We can only do this by allowing the Holy Qur'an to in-form and re-form every realm of our lives.

As a step in this direction, let us consider what the Qur'an has to teach us about the society towards which we should be striving, and ponder its effect on the position of women. What are the basic characteristics of a Qur'anic society which particularly affect women?

Five characteristics - which seem basic, crucial and incontrovertible - of Qur'anic society will be considered. Although they are presented in a series, each one rests upon the others and affects them. The interdependence of these five characteristics makes it difficult to speak of any one of them without mention of the others, and of course they do not and cannot exist in isolation from one another.

1. EQUAL STATUS AND WORTH OF THE SEXES

The first of these characteristics of a Qur'anic society which affect women is that both sexes are held to be equal in status and worth. In other words, the Qur'an teaches us that women and men are all creatures of Allah, existing on a level of equal worth and value, although their equal importance does not substantiate a claim for their equivalence or perfect identity. This equality of male and female is documentable in the Qur'an in passages pertaining to at least four aspects of human existence and interaction.

A. Religious Matters

The first of these Qur'anic confirmations of male-female equality are contained in statements pertaining to such religious matters as the origins of humanity, or to religious obligations and rewards.

1. Origins of Humanity. The Qur'an is devoid of the stories found in the Old Testament which denigrate women. There is no hint that the first woman created by God is a creature of lesser worth than the first male, or that she is a kind of appendage formed from one of his ribs. Instead, male and female are created, we read, min nafsin wahidatin ("from a single soul or self") to complement each other (Qur'an 4:1; 7:189). Whereas the Torah or Old Testament treats Eve as the temptress of the Garden of Eden, who aids Satan in enticing Adam to disobey God, the Qur'an deals with the pair with perfect equity. Both are equally guilty of sinning; both are equally punished by God with expulsion from the Garden; and both are equally forgiven when they repent.

2. Religious Obligations and Rewards. The Qur'an is not less clear in commanding equality for men and women in its directives regarding religious obligations and rewards. We read:

Lo! Men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who

persevere and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give aims and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard (their modesty), and men who remember Allah and women who remember-Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward. (33:35)

B. Ethical Obligations and Rewards

Secondly, the Qur'an reveals to mankind the desired equality of the two sexes by establishing the same ethical obligations and rewards for women and men.

And who so does good works, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer, such will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged the dint in a date-stone. (4:124)

Whosoever does right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them a recompense according to the best of what they do. (16:97)

If Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala had not deemed the two sexes of equal status and value, such explicit statements of their equality in ethical obligations and rewards would not have been made in the Qur'an.

C. Education

Although the more specific commands for the equal rights of women and men to pursue education can be found in the hadith literature, the Qur'an does at least imply the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. For example, it repeatedly commands all readers to read, to recite, to think, to contemplate, as well as to learn from the signs (ayat) of Allah in nature. In fact, the very first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (S) was concerned with knowledge. In a Qur'anic society, there can never be a restriction of this knowledge to one sex. It is the duty of every Muslim and every Muslimah to pursue knowledge throughout life, even if it should lead the seeker to China, we are told. The Prophet (S) even commanded that the slave girls be educated, and he asked Shifa' bint 'Abdillah to instruct his wife Hafsah bint 'Umar. Lectures of the Prophet (S) were attended by audiences of both men and women; and by the time of the Prophet's death, there were many women scholars.

D. Legal Rights

A fourth evidence in the Qur'an for the equality of men and women is its specification of legal rights which are guaranteed for every individual from cradle to grave. Unlike the situation in the West, where until the last century it was impossible for a married woman to hold property on her own, to contract with other persons, or to dispose of her property without the consent

of her husband, the Qur'an proclaims the right of every woman to buy and sell, to contract and to earn, and to hold and manage her own money and property. In addition to these rights, the Qur'an grants woman a share in the inheritance of the family (4:7-11), warns against depriving her of that inheritance (4:19), specifies that the dower (mahr) of her marriage should belong to her alone and never be taken by her husband (2:229; 4:19-21,25) unless offered by the woman as a free gift (4:44).

As with any privilege, these rights of women carry corresponding responsibilities. If she commits a civil offence, the Qur'an tells us, woman's penalty is no less or no more than that of a man in a similar case (5:41; 24:2). If she is wronged or harmed, she is entitled to compensation just like a man.

It is clear that the Qur'an not only recommends, but is even insistent upon, the equality of women and men as an essential characteristic of a Qur'anic society. The claim of the non-Muslim critics that Islam denigrates women is denied emphatically by the Qur'an. Similarly denied are the arguments of certain Muslims that women are religiously, intellectually and ethically inferior to men, as Jewish and Christian literatures had earlier maintained.

2. A DUAL SEX RATHER THAN UNISEX SOCIETY

Now let us consider the second basic characteristic of the Qur'anic society which affects the position of women. This is found in the directives for a dual sex rather than a unisex society. While maintaining the validity of the equal worth of men and women, the Qur'an does not judge this equality to mean equivalence or identity of the sexes.

Probably all of you are familiar with the contemporary move toward unisex clothes and shoes, unisex jewellery and hair styles, unisex actions and entertainments. In fact, it is often difficult in America to decide whether one is looking at a boy or a girl. This results from the current notion in Western society that there is little if any difference between the two sexes in physical, intellectual and emotional endowment; and that, therefore, there should be no difference in their functions and roles in society. The dress and the actions are but superficial evidence of this deeper conviction. Accompanied by a downgrading of the qualities and roles traditionally associated with the female sex, this current idea has generated a unisex society in which only the male role is respected and pursued. Although meant to bring a larger measure of equality for women, the idea that men and women are not only equal, but equivalent and identical, has actually pushed women into imitating men and even despising their womanhood. Thus it is generating a new type of male chauvinism. Tremendous social pressures have resulted in stripping women of their role-responsibilities formerly performed by them, and they are forced to live a life devoid of personality and individuality.

The society based on the Qur'an is, in contrast, a dual-sex society in which both sexes are assigned their special responsibilities. This assures the healthy functioning of the society for

the benefit of all its members. This division of labour imposes on men more economic responsibilities (2:233, 240-241; 4:34), while women are expected to play their role in childbearing and rearing (2:233; 7:189). The Qur'an, recognising the importance of this complementary sexual assignment of roles and responsibilities, alleviates the greater economic demands made on male members of the population by allotting them a larger share than women in inheritance. At the same time it grants women the right to maintenance in exchange for her contribution to the physical and emotional well being of the family and to the care she provides in the rearing of children. The unisex ideology generates a competitive relationship between the sexes which we find in America and which is disastrous for all members of society: the young; the old; the children; the parents; the single and the married; the male and the female. The dual-sex society, by contrast, is a more natural answer to the question of sexual relationships, a plan encouraging co-operation rather than competition between the sexes. It is a plan which has been found suitable in countless societies through history. Only in very recent times did the idea of sexual non-differentiation or identity achieve prominence, and then primarily in the Western society. Even the medical evidence for mental or emotional difference between the sexes is suppressed in Western research, for it threatens the prevailing trends of thought. How long this socially disastrous movement will continue before it is rejected as bankrupt is not known. But certainly we as Muslims should be aware of its deficiencies and dangerous consequences, and make our societies and young people aware of the disaster caused by it.

Protagonists of the unisex society have condemned the dual-sex human organisation as dangerous for the well-being of women. If dual sex means that one sex is superior to the other, such a situation could have arisen. But in the true Qur'anic society, toward which we all aspire to move, this is not possible. As we have seen above, the Qur'an advocates eloquently the equal status of women and men at the same time as it recognises their generally relevant differences of nature and function. Thus while acknowledging the religious, ethical, intellectual and legal equality of males and females, the Qur'an never regards the two sexes as identical or equivalent. It justifies this stand in its assignment of variant responsibilities and its provisions regarding inheritance and maintenance which match those responsibilities.

3. INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

The third characteristic of the Qur'anic society which is strongly assertive of women's position is the insistence on the interdependence of the members of society. Contrary to the contemporary trend to emphasize the rights of the individual at the expense of society, we find the Qur'an repeatedly emphasising the interdependence of the male and female as well as of all members of society. The wife and husband, for example, are described as "garments" (libas) of each other (2:187), and as mates living and dwelling in tranquillity (33:21;see also 7:189). Men and women are directed to complement each other, not to compete with each other. They are the protectors of each other (9:71). Each is called upon to fulfil certain assigned responsibilities for the good of both and the larger group.

In order to insure this interdependence which is so necessary for the physical and psychological well-being of both men and women, Allah, in the Holy Qur'an, stipulated the reciprocal or mutual duties and obligations of the various members of the family-men and women, fathers and mothers, children and elders, and relatives of all degrees (17:23-26; 4:1, 7-12; 2:177; 8:41; 16:90; etc.). The care of and concern for other members of society is equally a duty of the Muslim.

It is not righteousness that you turn faces to the east and the west; but righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the prophets; and gives his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free ... (2:177)

The Qur'an thereby instils in the Muslim a sense of a place within, and responsibility to society. This is not regarded or experienced as a repression of the individual. Instead the Muslim is constantly encouraged in this interdependence by experiencing the benefits it brings. The economic, social and psychological advantages of such close relationships and concerns within the social group provide more than ample compensation for the individual to sublimate his/her individualistic aspirations. The anonymity and lack of social interdependence among its members in contemporary Western society have caused many serious problems. Loneliness, inadequate care of the aged, the generation gap, high suicide rates, and juvenile crime can all be traced back to the ever-worsening breakdown of social interdependence and the denial of the human necessity for mutual care.

4. THE EXTENDED FAMILY

Closely intertwined with interdependence is the fourth basic characteristic of the Qur'anic society which serves to improve male-female relations. This is the institution of the extended family. In addition to the members of the nucleus that constitutes the family- mother, father and their children-the Islamic family or 'a'ilah also includes grandparents, uncles, aunts and their offspring. Normally Muslim families are "residentially extended;" that is, their members live communally with three or more generations of relatives in a single building or compound. Even where this residential version of the extended family is not possible or adhered to, family connections reaching far beyond the nuclear unit are evident in strong psychological, social, economic and even political ties.

The extended family solidarity is prescribed and strengthened by the Holy Qur'an, where we find repeated references to the rights of kin (17:23-26; 4:7-9; 8:41; 24:22; etc.) and the importance of treating them with kindness (2 :83; 16: 90; etc.). Inheritance portions, for not only the nuclear family members but those of the extended family as well, are specifically prescribed (2:180-182; 4:33,176). Dire punishment is threatened for those who ignore these measures for intra-family support (4:7-12). The extended family of Islamic culture is thus not merely a product of social conditions, it is an institution anchored in the word of God Himself

and buttressed by Qur'anic advice and rules.

The extended family is an institution which can provide tremendous benefits for both women and men when it exists in conjunction with the other basic characteristics of a Qur'anic society.

1) It guards against the selfishness or eccentricity of any one party, since the individual faces not a single spouse but a whole family of peers, elders and children if he or she goes "off course."

2) It allows for careers for women without detriment to themselves, spouse, children or elders, since there are always other adults in the home to assist the working wife or mother. Career women in an Islamic extended family suffer neither the physical and emotional burden of overwork nor the feeling of guilt for neglecting maternal, marital or familial responsibilities. In fact, without this sort of family institution, it is impossible to imagine any feasible solution for the problems now facing Western society. As more and more women enter the work force, the nuclear family is unable to sustain the needs of its members. The difficulties in the single parent family are of course magnified a hundred-fold. The strain that such family systems put on the working woman are devastating to the individual as well as to the marriage and family bonds. The dissolutions of families which result and psychological and social ramifications of the high divorce rate in America and other Western nations are the growing concern of doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists and sociologists as well as, of course, of the unfortunate victims of these phenomena.

3) The extended family insures the adequate socialisation of children. A mother's or father's advice in a nuclear or single parent family may be difficult to be followed by an unruly or obstinate child, but the combined pressure of the members of a strong extended family is an effective counter to non-conformance or disobedience.

4) The extended family provides for psychological and social diversity in companionship for adults as well as children. Since there is less dependence on the one-to-one relationship, there are less emotional demands on each member of the family. A disagreement or clash between adults, children or between persons of different generations does not reach the damaging proportions it may in the nuclear family. There are always alternative family members on hand to ease the pain and provide therapeutic counselling and companionship. Even the marriage bond is not put to the enormous strains that it suffers in the nuclear family.

5) The extended family or a'ilah guards against the development of the generation gap. This social problem arises when each age group becomes so isolated from other generations that it finds difficulty in achieving successful and meaningful interaction with people of a different age level. In the 'a'ilah, three or more generations live together and constantly interact with one another. This situation provides beneficial learning and socialisation experiences for

children and the necessary sense of security and usefulness for the older generation.

6) The 'a'ilah eliminates the problems of loneliness which plague the isolated and anonymous dwellers in the urban centres of many contemporary societies. The unmarried woman, or the divorced or widowed woman in an Islamic extended family will never suffer the problems that face such women in contemporary American society, for example. In a Qur'anic society, there is no need for the commercial computer dating establishments, the singles' clubs and bars, or the isolation of senior citizens in retirement villages or old people's homes.

The social and psychological needs of the individual, whether male or female, are cared for in the extended family.

As marriage-bonds grow more and more fragile in Western society, women tend to be the chief victims of the change. They are less able to re-establish marriage or other bonds than men, and they are more psychologically damaged by these losses.

7) The extended family provides a more feasible and humane sharing of the care of the elderly. In the nuclear family unit, the care of the elderly parent or parents of one spouse may fall entirely on one individual, usually the mother of the family. She must provide for the extra physical care as well as for the emotional well-being of the elderly. This is a tremendous burden on a woman who probably has children's and husband's needs to attend to as well. If she is a working mother, the burden can be unmanageable; and the elderly are put in an old peoples' home to await death. With the shared responsibilities and duties that the extended family provides, the burden is significantly lightened .

5. A PATRIARCHAL FAMILY ORGANIZATION

The fifth basic characteristic of a Qur'anic society is that it is patriarchal. Contrary to the goals of the Women's Liberation movement, the Qur'an calls for a society which assigns the ultimate leadership and decision-making role in the family to men.

Any society is made up of smaller organisations of humans, governments, political parties, religious organisations, commercial enterprises, extended families, etc. Each of these organs needs to be stable, cohesive and manoeuvrable if it is to be beneficial to its constituents. In order to acquire these characteristics, the organisation must assign ultimate responsibility to some individual or some group within its ranks.

Therefore, the citizens may vote, parliament may legislate, and the police may enforce the law; but it is ultimately the head of state that carries the burden of making the crucial decisions for the nation, as well as the onus or approval, i.e., the responsibility, for those decisions. In like manner, the work of a factory is conducted by many individuals, but all of them are not equally capable of making the ultimate decisions for the company. Neither is

each employee equally charged with the responsibility for the organisation's success or failure.

The family also has need for someone to carry the burden of ultimate responsibility for the whole. The Qur'an has assigned this role to the most senior male member of the family. It is this patriarchal assignment of power and responsibility which is meant by such expressions as "wa lil rijali 'alathinna darajatun " (2.228; see supra, pp. 40, 41), and "al-rijalu qawwdmuna 'ala al-nisa'i.... " (4:34). Contrary to misrepresentations by the Qur'an's enemies, these passages do not mean the subjugation of women to men in a gender-based dictatorship. Such an interpretation shows a blatant disregard of the Qur'an's repeated calls for the equality of the sexes and for its command to show respect and kindness to women. The passages in question point instead to a means for avoiding internal dissension and indecision for the benefit of all family members. They advocate for a patriarchal society.

In addition, we would draw attention to the use of the word qawwamun in the statement, al-rijalu qawwamuna 'ala al-nisa'i ... (4:34). Certainly the verb qawwama, from which the verbal noun qawwamun is derived, does not imply despotic overlordship. Instead, the term refers to the one who stands up (from qama, "to stand") for another in a protective and benevolent way. If an autocratic or domineering role for the male half of the society had been meant, there are many other verbal derivatives which would have been more applicable, for example, musaytirun and muhayminun Other instances of the Qur'anic use of the term qawwamun confirm this supportive rather than authoritarian or tyrannical meaning of the term (see 4:127-135; 5:9). Ascription of a different significance to the passage in question is, therefore, ideologically inconsistent as well as linguistically unsupportable.

Why should the Qur'an specify male leadership for the 'a'ilah, i.e., a patriarchal family, rather than a matriarchal organisation? The Qur'an answers that question in the following manner:

Men are in charge of women, because Allah has made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women)....(4:34)

Physical and economic contributions and responsibility are, therefore, the Qur'anic reasons for proposing a patriarchal rather than a matriarchal society.

Some Westerners, confronted by the problems of contemporary society, are beginning to ask such questions as: Where can we turn for help? What can we do in the face of the present social disintegration? It is a time of despair and searching as Western society reels under the blows of steadily increasing personal disorientation and societal dissolution.

What can we do as Muslims to help? First of all, we must build true Qur'anic societies throughout the Muslim World. Without these, we cannot establish equitable and viable accommodation for the interaction of men and women in society. In addition, we cannot hope

to establish in the coming generations a respect for and loyalty to our societies and their accompanying institutions if pseudo-Islamic societies are the only ones we are capable of producing and maintaining. Pseudo-Islamic measures or institutions are actually anti-Islamic; for they posit a model which cannot be respected, and attach to it the label of "islam" in the minds of many Muslims as well as non-Muslim. this results in a wrongful transfer of the onus of the faulty institution to the religion of Islam itself.

We must educate our fellow Muslims-and especially the youth for they are the leaders of tomorrow-with regard to the importance and viability of their (Qur'anic traditions concerning women, the family and society. Despite the failure of alternative contemporary Western social patterns, some Muslims seem to hanker after the Western brand of sexual equality, its unisex ideas and modes of behaviour, overemphasis on individualism or personal freedom from responsibility, and the nuclear family system. We must awake to the dangers which accompany such social ideas and practices. If the consequences of these ideas and practices are not pointed out and combated, we are doomed to an unfortunate future as such social experiments are to fail ultimately.

But even this is not an adequate response for us as Muslims. As vicegerents of Allah on earth (2:30), it is our duty to be concerned about the whole world and about all of God's creatures. In the light of the command to propagate the will of Allah in every corner of the earth, we should not neglect to suggest or offer the good that we know to others. It is time for Islam and the Muslims to present their solutions of the problems of contemporary society, not only to the Muslim audience, but to the non-Muslim audience as well. This can and should be done through the living example of true Qur'anic societies in which the problems of men and women are resolved. It should also be done through informative writings and discussions by our scholars which could be made available to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

There is no better way to serve the will of Allah and the whole of mankind. There is no better da'wah than such offering of a helping hand to the struggling victims of contemporary society.

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Western Nationalism and Islamic Nationhood

Murtada Mutahhari

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This article is an introduction (pishguftar) that Martyr Murtada Mutahhari wrote for his book Khadamat-e mutaqabil-e Islam wa Iran (The Mutual Services of Islam and Iran) first published in 1349 H.Sh./1960. The translation of this book is under way and will soon be published by the Sazman-e Tablighat-e Islami, and we hope to publish some parts of it in the future in al-Tawhid.

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The relations, conflicts and clashes between various nations have in the present age become a daily issue which has acquired much greater significance than in any other epoch of human history. One of the problems related to it, or perhaps one of the most fundamental of them, is the problem of nationalism, its constructive elements, its scope and limits.

During the last two or three decades many new nations, whose number exceeds fifty, have come into existence, or have acquired a new shape and name. In some cases, a country or a nation was divided into two or more parts, each pursuing a different path. In some cases nations with specific ideological, religious and geographical characteristics have completely changed their philosophical and religious conditions to replace them by a totally different system of ideas and social institutions. All these changes and the birth of new nations accompanying them, were preceded by years of struggle, resistance, endeavour and bloodshed, which consumed immeasurable time, energy and talents of peoples and called for many sacrifices, small and great.

Did the nations that emerged during recent times have no existence in the past? Did the nations that were separated and divided not form a real, stable social unit in their previous state? Those nations that changed their system while preserving most of their specific traits such as language, race, ecological conditions and geographical boundaries, are they still what

they were in the past? Moreover, all the main political, social, and military problems of our age are formulated in terms of nations and national interests. Nationalism is the most current and popular of all ideologies at present. Even those social and political ideologies that are opposed to nationalist tendencies, on initiating a movement, present themselves in nationalist garb and fall back upon nationalist slogans.

From a different point of view, for us Iranians, too, the issue of nationalism has contemporary relevance, in spite of the fact that our nation and homeland have not been attacked or occupied by any foreign power, and we see much difference and many contradictions between interpretations given by various individuals to nationalism. At present two factors are at work: first, there is the racial and hereditary factor which is related to our history preceding the last fourteen centuries; the second factor relates to the ideological, religious, social and cultural traditions formed and developed during the last fourteen centuries. As for our physical and racial roots, we belong to the Aryan race, and with regard to our ideological and cultural constitution, traditions and social institutions we are linked to Islam, which came to our land through a non-Aryan race. If we give basic importance to the factors of race and heredity in our definition of 'nation', it will, under the present circumstances, take our nation on a particular course in the future. However, if the social institutions and the ideological structure prevailing for the last fourteen centuries are considered to be of basic importance in defining our nationality, our policy and our future course will be something different. If we give priority to the Aryan factor in determining and defining Iranian nationality, its consequence in the last analysis will be to make us closely related to the Western world. And this affinity and relation to the West would influence our national and political policy, whose main result would be to break our relationship with our neighbours and non-Aryan Muslim nations and incline us towards Europe and the West. In this case, the imperialist West becomes our kin and Muslim Arabs will become strangers. On the contrary, if the ideological system, religion, and social institutions of the last fourteen centuries are regarded as the deciding factor in identifying our nationality, it will lead us to adopt a different course and policy whose basis is faith. In that case Arab, Turk, Indian, Indonesian and Chinese Muslims will be our own kinsmen, and the non-Muslim West will be alien to us.

Hence the issue of nationality is not a purely academic issue; it is a real issue of vital importance which determines the course of action and policy, the future and the destiny of a social and political unit known today as the Iranian nation. Hence it deserves to be taken up seriously and understood clearly.

The Historical Background:

Nationalism, in its present form and current sense, emerged in Germany, essentially as a consequence of and reaction to the French Revolution which overwhelmed entire Europe. The French Revolution itself was a reaction to and revolt against the old feudal thinking, which

did not attach any value or importance to the masses and common people. It was from that time that 'nation' and 'masses', and individual's liberty and equality became central themes in the writings of authors, poets and philosophers. Liberty and equality, which the authors of the 'Declaration of The Rights of Man' claimed to have brought as a gift for mankind, in themselves did not recognize any boundary or nationality. It was due to this universal appeal that the light of the French Revolution, in the short period of a decade, crossed the frontiers of France and engulfed the whole of Europe and affected Germany in particular. In Germany, political philosophers and writers became so much enchanted with the ideas of freedom and liberty that they devoted all their energies exclusively to propagate those ideas. Fichte, the German philosopher, is among the forerunners of this new spirit.

Soon the Germans came to realize that the liberty proclaimed in the Declaration of The Rights of Man meant in Germany something reserved exclusively for the French, and the people of Germany had no share in it. Fichte was the first man to raise his voice against this discrimination. In the course of his famous fourteen lectures delivered at the Berlin Academy, while giving vent to his protest against this discrimination, Fichte, as a reaction to the French character of liberty and equality, advanced the myth of 'the German nation' as a real and indivisible unit which on account of its racial, geographical, linguistic and cultural character and traditions was endowed with an innate genius and an exclusive status. In this way German nationalism, which later on emerged as the progenitor of nationalism in the world, was born.

Nationalism, as conceived by its authors in the West, considers a people of a common race living together within particular geographical boundaries, with a common historical background, language, culture and traditions as a fundamental, indivisible unit. Accordingly, all that belongs to the orbit of the interests, advantages, status and worth of such a unit and contributes to them is considered 'friendly' and 'own', and all the rest is treated as 'alien' and 'hostile'.

In the nineteenth century, three basic reactions or tendencies emerged from the maxims of the French Revolution: 1. the nationalist response; 2. the conservative response; and 3. the socialist response.

The first two trends, in the view of political thinkers, are deviant and opposed to the spirit of revolution, while the third trend is considered to seek the goals of justice and equality. [1]

After Fichte, nationalism found its exponents among thinkers like Charles Moras (?) and Bares (?), who largely shaped and systematized the nationalist philosophy and beliefs of various European countries. Moras stretches the idea of indivisible national unit to the extent of advocating that the nation, as a real, collective entity, should govern all individual wills. He saw the embodiment of this collective personality in the State. It was this idea that proved to be the source of totalitarian regimes and provided a doctrinal basis to Nazism in Germany and

Fascism in Italy.

Henceforth, the period covering the entire nineteenth century and extending up to the first half of the twentieth century is marked as the age of the emergence and development of nationalism in European societies. Though in the social and political spheres the socialist and conservative tendencies also exercised much influence on the thought of European intellectuals, nevertheless, the nationalist tendency in European States became so dominant that all other kinds of tendencies, including liberalism, conservatism and Marxian socialism, were overshadowed by it. It was the same nationalist spirit of European States which in its extreme form appeared as the ideology of ethnocentrism and racism, and gave birth to the two great wars. Over and above this, it was the same nationalism of Europe, which in spite of all the slogans of freedom and equality of human beings, defended and justified colonization of the countries of Asia, Africa and South America. The nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, being the period of intensive and extensive colonial exploitation of Asia and Africa, was a period synonymous and concurrent with the appearance and spread of nationalist ideologies.

Writers and historians of the West, in accordance with the same notions, call various movements in other countries nationalist movements. Intellectuals and thinkers of Asia and Africa, under the inspiration of Western culture and under the influence of Western education, apply this term to their own popular movements. They judge their own movements by the same criteria which were introduced by Western thinkers to differentiate and identify their own nations. Although since the end of the Second World War, nationalism and national interests have given way to regionalism and regional alliances - at least on the level of economic and colonial interests and to some extent in the social sphere - nevertheless, each of the countries of Western Europe and North America try to point out their national characteristics to Eastern and African visitors and students with a view to convince them that nationalism is still a revitalizing force which is instrumental in the advancements made by Western people and their culture. The aim is that on returning to their own countries they would follow nationalist ideas and preach and propagate them among their own people, so that the countries of the Third World should always keep themselves apart from one another under banners of separate nationalities, races, languages and ancestral legacies, and engage in perpetual conflict and rivalry against their own neighbours and other countries which have also been suffering from the same kind of malaise left behind by Western colonialism.

While the Western countries, with all their power and cultural, political and economic domination, are united together to exploit other nations, the Third-World countries, with all their inadequacies and with all their political, cultural and economic backwardness, pursue separate paths isolating them from one another.

Let us examine whether the principle of drawing lines of demarcation and distinction between different human social units has any real grounds in the world of concrete actualities. In case it has a real basis, we have to examine whether the criteria of actual demarcation are

the same as taught to us by Western nationalism.

The Classical Criteria:

We observe that the peoples of the world are different and distinct from one another, from Turkey, Persia and Arabia to the farthest corners of Africa, Europe and Asia. They are different not only in colour, features, language and physical characteristics, but are also different in their norms, traditions, cultures and even in their modes of thinking as well as their spiritual and psychological makeups. If we want to classify various kinds of people into independent social groups, we have to see whether colour, race, ecological conditions and geographical boundaries can suffice to serve as the sole criteria of differentiation, or if we have to take into consideration their traditions, historical backgrounds, cultural traits and other factors as well. The sense of nationhood, i.e. nationalism, is constituted by the existence of a common feeling, a collective consciousness, among a group of people bound together in a political unit forming a nation. This collective consciousness creates a strong internal bond and cohesion among the living members of a society and their ancestors and predecessors, determines the character of relations and associations among themselves as well as with other nations, and brings about a harmony in their aspirations and hopes.

According to the classical Western definition, this collective consciousness is a product of the conditions determined by regional and racial characteristics, a common language, specific traditions, historical heritage and a common culture. A deeper understanding of the nature of individual and social behaviour of man indicates that the above-mentioned factors do not play a basic and vital role in the genesis of collective consciousness and are incapable of serving permanently as a cementing force and the bond of integrity among the members of a nation.

Language:

It is evident that at early stages of the genesis of a nationality, common language and traditions contribute to bringing individuals together, inculcating in them a sense of shared identity, and serve as the channel that interconnects their hearts and feelings, and consequently leads to the emergence of a collective and national consciousness. But if we study the past of nations, we find that a common language is not a constituent element but a product of nationhood. None of these people had a common language from the early stages of their genesis. On the other hand, it was only after they had come together and become emotionally attached to each other in a particular region that they evolved a common language in the course of their own development. It gradually developed and evolved its grammatical principles in the course of centuries. In the process of interaction with the languages of other nations, their language underwent many changes and continuously evolved new forms until it acquired its present shape.

If in particular epochs of the history of a nation, for instance during the period of a nation's

freedom struggle, its language or specific traditions find more forceful expression, becoming the symbol of its national inspirations - as happened in the case of Hindi[2] during the Indian Freedom Movement or in the case of Arabic during the Algerian struggle for independence - such a phenomenon is always transitory. In these instances, language is used as an instrument to motivate the nation's masses to act unitedly.

Race:

Researches in history and sociology indicate that all human races, under favourable social and moral conditions, are capable of developing all human qualities. As we know, the pre-Islamic Arabs were plagued by all kinds of prejudices, tribal conflicts, quarrels and superstitions, which were products of bigotry; but after embracing Islam and being infused with its moral virtues, its revolutionary spirit of tawhid, and its passion for social justice, they acquired the qualities that characterized them as the most civilized and advanced of all human societies of the time. If after some time their old racial prejudices once again raised their heads and reasserted themselves, it happened because of deterioration in conditions conducive to the moral, social and monotheistic values nurtured by Islam. This indicates that there are no national traits that may be considered as permanent and unchangeable racial characteristics. As a matter of fact, all the traits and their influence can be modified under changed social and moral conditions. The Algerian people's example is a recent evidence of this fact.

What are the factors and circumstances that can help in preserving the desired social and moral conditions and whether it is possible to preserve them at all, are questions that fall outside the scope of our present discourse. However, it is admissible that the factor of specific racial traits has always played a vital and effective role in the history of nations in shaping their development and progress or causing their degeneration and decline. But to admit the role of this factor does not mean that it is also effective in bringing together a people and cementing their individual minds to produce a collective consciousness.

More often, the common elements produced by racial traits, instead of functioning as a factor of cohesion and integration and serving as a source of collective consciousness and national unity, either generate internal divisions and aversions, or render a nation weak, unstable and vulnerable. The nations which from the very beginning possessed martial qualities and engaged in constant wars, attacking and pillaging other nations, abided in conflict, either with others or within themselves, until they grew weak and exhausted, or some other factors, which were social and moral in essence, entered their lives in the course of history, providing them with ground for retaining their unity and cohesion:

> And remember God's blessing upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, so that by His blessing you became brothers ... (3:103)

On the contrary, the nations that possessed the trait of peacefulness and adaptability, not only among themselves and with their living conditions and environment, but also in relation to all other peoples - even invaders, with whom they were inclined to mix, adjust and conform - such nations could not develop a feeling of nationhood or racial unity. In case they did develop such a feeling, it was colourless, ineffective, devoid of distinctive vitality and prone to weakness and decline.

Basically, it is one of the basic characteristics of every human individual that he, in his rationally thought out or emotionally directed relationships, tends to establish relations with those who, by fulfilling and satisfying his inner urges and aspirations, are in a position to compensate for his individual shortcomings. The firmest bond of love is one in which the lover feels that his most basic and profound needs can find their fulfilment in the person of the beloved. Our day-to-day experience provides abundant evidence of this fact. Similarly, the strength of a group's internal bonds of social relationships and emotional cohesion is ensured only when various units constituting it are complementary and satisfy the needs of other units. It is in this context that the racial factor, with its fixed traits and characteristics, is of no consequence so far as unity and cohesion are concerned.

Traditions:

In different nations we find various common traditions which, in the same manner as language and race, distinguish them from others. But here a question arises: How far are they effective in making a nation? Customs and traditions, even cultures, are products and results of the voluntary and conscious activities of individuals of past generations. If there were no relation and connection between past and present generations and social institutions, these traditions would never be transferred from generation to generation. Unless there is a collective feeling and consciousness of unity, tradition and culture cannot be inherited by succeeding generations. Hence all existing national traditions themselves are rather products of national consciousness and human beings' life and activity in that direction, rather than being their basis and source.

Furthermore, the existing social traditions of a nation are of two kinds: firstly, those which emanate from higher moral values and sublime strivings and struggles of the past, embodying all sacred human virtues which are directed at establishing the rule of justice and good; secondly, those traditions that spring from ignorance and lust for worldly benefits and are derived from unjust social relations. The first kind of traditions are responsible for the continuity of the life, advancement, progress and prosperity of nations, while the second kind of traditions result in retrogression, decline, slavery and deception of peoples and are tools and instruments in the hands of the rich and the ruling class.

Since justice, piety, progress and development are the vehicles of life, good and healthy traditions are those that emanate from these values and are instrumental in strengthening the

life and stability of a nation. On the other hand, undesirable or unhealthy traditions lead to the decline of a nation and even cause its destruction and death. For an evidence of this claim, it is sufficient to glance at history and study the fate of nations from the peoples of Lot, 'Ad, Thamud, ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece up to the present nations of the world.

As a matter of principle, the evolution of living beings has been in the direction of attaining freedom from natural limitations, external environmental conditions and internal instinctive urges. The primitive man, who emerged at the end of a long evolutionary process, was the freest of creatures from the shackles of nature. Nevertheless, this freedom was never absolute; it was relatively greater than that of other animals that existed before the emergence of man. Primitive human beings were still governed by the forces of instinct and physical nature, forces at work from within and without. With the gradual development of man's consciousness and his volitional faculties, man could attain greater and greater freedom from the bondage of physical and instinctive determinants. In human society, too, at early stages of its formation and evolution, individuals' relations with one another were determined by inner urges as well as by physical and environmental factors. In primitive societies, first environmental and physical conditions and subsequently emotional, familial and tribal associations had been basically instrumental in constituting social consciousness. But in developed and advanced societies, in which new emergent factors participate in moulding social consciousness and in determining social relations among members of society, the role of physical factors - including the factor of environment - decreased gradually and these factors became of lesser and lesser significance.

Today we find a large number of states and nations in a particular region and living under similar physical and geographical conditions that not only do not form a single national entity, but are at loggerheads and at times in a state of direct confrontation with one another. In the Indian Subcontinent, the Hindu and the Muslim communities, despite living under similar physical and environmental conditions, do not share similar national feelings, and lack the bond of cohesion essential for a nation's solidarity. A similar example is that of the English and the Irish, who in spite of sharing the same historical, social and linguistic heritage, do not nurture the spirit of harmony and understanding that can make them a single nation. On the contrary, in our age we find many Third-World countries thousands of kilometres apart and peoples living in different physical and environmental conditions, with considerably vast differences of language, race and historical heritage, who have a profound sense of solidarity. For instance, the Algerians feel a sense of unity with the people of Cuba or Vietnam or with the Palestinians

All the above factors mentioned by Western authors as the constituent elements of nationhood may form the elementary criteria for defining existing nations and for distinguishing them as distinct entities, in the same way as each of the hundred and odd elements found in nature are defined and differentiated according to their specific physical and chemical properties. But these properties which appear to be fundamental and innate at first on a superficial knowledge of things prove to be essential at a later stage. A deeper

insight into the inner world of the atom discovers that the apparent differences of elements are manifestations of the number of electrons constituting the atoms. In fact, it is the number of electrons in an atom that is responsible for the emergence and manifestation of various kinds of elements. A similar probe is to be conducted in order to find out more fundamental factors at work beneath the level of various factors and elements - some of which have been discussed above - that identify, distinguish, and define a national unit. We should conduct this research at a deeper level to discover the more fundamental factors which are real constituents of collective consciousness, or at least are closer to them than the factor discussed above. It is always some more basic and latent factor which is alive and at work in the consciousness of people and manifests itself as a lifestream in external forms. It externalizes itself from time to time in particular language patterns and specific national traditions. The main aim and objective of all research and investigation is to lead us to this basic reality and the hidden meaning underlying all external phenomena comprising things and temporal events, which are mere appearances.

Frantz Fanon, an African writer and sociologist who has done penetrating psychological and sociological researches on the development of national consciousness among various African peoples, arrives at the conclusion that the factors of common history, language and cultural traditions, along with geographical conditions, play only a transitory role in the birth of national awareness; these factors are not of permanent significance. He cites the examples of nations engaged in the struggle for freedom and independence from imperialism, and points out that in these countries the really basic human ideals and aspirations sometimes find expression in such commonly shared factors as tradition, history and language. But these are means only of attaining the desired goals. With the dawn of independence the points of division and conflict appear again. The nation's rich who struggled for freedom until last night, part their way from the deprived masses of the nation. While the former take the course of occupying positions of power in order to consolidate their political and economic privileges and to cash in on their past deprivations and sufferings borne during the freedom struggle, the latter take the path of resistance and struggle against the former in order to attain their rights. Ultimately these divergent paths divide them causing a new social stratification and class conflict. As a consequence of this conflict, the nation is again divided into two or more classes pursuing conflicting ideals, though its members have a common language, common customs, culture and history. There is abundant evidence of class conflicts and religious discords within the present nations, which is sufficient to show that the factors of common language, history, culture and tradition do not have a permanent basis.

Political independence, which has been the strongest impetus for the awakening of nationalist sentiments and has been the common ideal of all the nations of the world, has lost its meaning in the present situation - at least for the countries of the Third World - due to the presence of world imperialism. In a large number of newly independent countries, as well as countries that have been independent for a long time, political organizations and even the political structure, disguise themselves as champions of national interests while operating in reality as agents of foreign powers and serving their exploitative interests. These foreign agents, armed

and equipped with 'independence' and 'national sovereignty', serve foreign interests, although their organizations, parties and governing bodies are formed of members of that nation and share with its people the same language, culture and history.

Even in the advanced and powerful countries of the world today, the original meaning and import of political independence and territorial sovereignty have lost their former significance. Now these countries are realigning themselves in regional groups. This change in attitudes indicates that these countries consider their linguistic, traditional, cultural and racial differences to be inessential or insignificant in view of their present interests and goals. This unity expresses itself more prominently in the fields of economic, social and cultural cooperation. The present-day Western world, with regard to culture and economy, has emerged as a monolithic force against the Third World. As a consequence, Western countries have set aside their national identities and differences, at least in the area of the common economic interests of the region. In the countries of the Third World (the developing and the underdeveloped countries), also, on the one hand, the economy and the ruling elite are in the grip and under the domination of economic superpowers of the advanced world; on the other, their cultural leadership is in the hands of the so-called intellectual class that blindly follows the dominant Western culture and imposes it on their people.

The Role of Intellectuals:

In underdeveloped societies under the yoke of imperialism, it is usually intellectuals who try to awaken national consciousness among the people of their country. Since, in their view, the linguistic and cultural traditions of their country are synonymous with and responsible for the actual conditions of the life of their nation - which is an amalgam of misfortunes, backwardness, difficulties and deprivations - they abstain from emphasizing traditional culture. Therefore, they ask the people to give up their past and to turn to the advanced and dominant countries as their ideal and model. They strive to inculcate those models as the ideal goal towards which the new national consciousness should evolve and develop.

Frantz Fanon, an enlightened sociologist, in the chapter on national culture of his work of lasting significance The Cursed of the Earth (Les damn ees de la terre, de la culture nationale), considers the emergence of such an ethos among intellectuals of the countries affected by colonialism as a raw and initial phase in the crystallization of national consciousness in this class. In this phase, in his view, the intellectual of a society affected by colonialism, while earnest in his endeavour to awaken national consciousness, is himself totally submerged in colonial culture. In every respect his ideas are true copies of his counterparts in the imperialist countries.[3] In other words. at this stage, although the thought of the intellectuals of exploited countries belongs to the realm of ideas, it is nothing but a commodity imported from the other side of the frontiers from the dominant countries of the West. The intellectual, at this juncture, is capable only of translating alien culture into his own language and actions.

His confidence in his information and the contents of his memory usually make him arrogant - an attitude strengthened by the general ignorance and backwardness of the people of his land that prevents him from closely and critically studying and analysing actual facts and events. It would take years, or perhaps centuries, of tragic events for such intellectuals and for the people, who have been spell-bound by them, to awaken from their complacent slumber and to realize the true worth of their ideas.

Apart from this, intellectuals of this brand direct their intellectual and practical efforts towards the awakening of national consciousness only at the initial stages of national movement. In a short course of time, because of the nature of their thought and spirit, they adopt the Western style of life and develop fondness for superficial aspects of Western culture which urge them towards affluent and comfortable ways of European life. This compulsive inclination towards the West, of necessity, makes them maintain silence, or occasionally even prompts them to compromise with the agents of oppression, exploitation and corruption. As a result, they are assimilated in the institutions of imperialism and become its obedient tools.

The second stage, in Fanon's analysis, comprises of a determined effort on the part of the intellectual to devote himself to the situation of his people with greater sincerity. But since the existing conditions of the nation present nothing but distress, anxiety, ignorance and backwardness, he turns his attention toward those epochs of the nation's past in which he sees grandeur, glory and greatness or at least pomp and pageantry. Thereupon, he at once breaks himself off from all relations with the present and leaps across centuries - which, with the people who inhabited them and their long chain of causes and effects, have shaped the present - to some point thousands of years in the past. If the actual history of his nation fails to provide such a golden age, he takes recourse in myths and legends.[4]

The only worth of the ideas and efforts of this class of intellectuals is that they should be confined to the pages of books or entertain and comfort a limited group of people for a short period of time. Since they do not emerge from the present sufferings of human beings, they are absolutely incapable of arousing national and popular awareness among people.

The third stage of change commences when the intellectual liberates himself from fantasy and comes to terms with his people and acquaints himself with their hardships and sufferings. At this stage, the intellectual, having tasted the hardships and deprivations of the common people, shares with them their aspirations. He respects the beliefs and sentiments of the people, familiarizes himself with them and draws inspiration from them. It is at this stage only that an intellectual can play an effective leading role in making, arousing and moulding the national consciousness of his nation, provided he is sincere and free from blind imitation of his Western teachers. The more committed and flexible he is, the more rapid and far-reaching influence he can exercise in the realms of thought and action.

The Real Lines of Demarcation:

Now that the factors supposed to be effective, according to the classical definition of nationalism, in giving rise to national unity and collective consciousness have lost their relevance today, shall we assert that there are essentially no real lines of demarcation between various social units of mankind and, such being the case, all nations can, or rather should, merge together to form a single nation?

The experience of human history and the evidence provided by social conflicts and upheavals show that the human world has been divided into many groups and classes different and distinct from one another, each following a different path, and, therefore, the possibility of such a merger does not exist. Social, political and cultural changes taking place in the contemporary age are leading the Western world every day further away from the Third World in respects of understanding and unity. Despite much talk about coexistence, world peace and unity, the hard realities of the present situation and dynamics of change make such ideas appear far-fetched and impracticable. As long as there exist wolves and sheep in the world, there is no possibility of any unity between them. As soon as a group organizes itself in the form of a political entity, whatever its basis, it attracts the greed of other groups and becomes prone to encroachment and aggression. Hence, it is compelled to protect its territorial, political and economic interests and defend its culture and ideology from its enemies' onslaughts.

We are not interested here in discussing the present differentiation of nations; our aim is to discover the elements and factors that form national awareness among a group of people and fuse them emotionally with one another in a way that a nation comes into being.

We have already seen that the factors usually known to be responsible for national integration, viz. Language, cultural heritage, historical background and race, although, of initial effectiveness in the formation of a nation, fail to serve as a basic and permanent ground for national unity. For this reason, we do not consider them to be essential; they are rather accidental. The people who once fought together against foreigners for independence and dignity were, after reaching this goal, divided again into rulers and the ruled, into privileged and underprivileged, in accordance with their expectations, claims, interests and objectives. As a consequence of this, the national struggle against alien domination is transformed into an internal class struggle. The people sharing a common culture, language and race become divided and wage war against one another. The same people and the same individuals who were earlier united by a collective awareness now lose the sense of togetherness due to changed social relations. The question raised earlier still remains unanswered: What is the real basis and source of the formation of a national unit or a nation? What is the nature of the bond that cements together the hearts and feelings of various individuals, as a consequence of which common aspirations and ideals emerge?

As in the case of the Algerian people when they started their struggle against French

colonialism, or as in the case of the Palestinians' struggle for regaining their legitimate right and human dignity, or as in the case of the Vietnameses, we observe that the commonly accepted factors of nationhood that is common language, historical heritage and territorial and economic interests - were effective in creating a sense of affinity and mutual understanding among the individuals of a nation. But at the same time we also see that there are other peoples in various parts of the world whose sympathy with the cause of Algeria, Palestine or Vietnam is as intense as that of an Algerian, a Palestinian, or a Vietnamese. A strong sense of unity and a deeply-felt bond of sympathy for these people joins the peoples of different nations and regions. This sense of unity sometimes prompts a group of individuals to forget their women and children, environment and country, and to join the ranks of those struggling thousands of miles away from their homeland. They even sacrifice their lives for others with whom they have nothing common - neither language nor culture, nor historical heritage. If you study the history of these freedom movements, you will see in their midst many individuals of "alien" nationality who fought for their cause, even performed heroic deeds, and, after the victory, became part and parcel of the freed peoples, merging with them to build a new nation.

On the other hand, we find diverse groups within a nation sharing a common language, tradition, culture and geographical conditions who are not bound to one another with a sense of oneness. Their ideals and aspirations for the future do not conform and are contradictory. If there is some semblance of a bond of unity, it is merely superficial and mechanical, contrived to meet the needs of their day-to-day life. Many a battle is fought by their governments and ruling cliques, of which their own people remain totally unaware or to which they show complete indifference. In our own history there are ample instances of such an attitude of indifference on the part of the people. On the contrary, it happens very often that the people of Africa or India express great interest, warmth and intense enthusiasm for the victory of the people of Palestine or Algeria or Vietnam. Hence, it may be concluded that neither the historical, geographical, political, racial and linguistic frontiers constitute any barrier between members of human species, nor do these factors constitute a bond of unity between them.

Common Sufferings:

How do the people scattered in different parts of the world evolve strong emotional ties and common ideals? What is common among them that unites people far away from one another and breaks them off from their own neighbours and even compatriots? The factor under question may be described as the experience of common sufferings, the common anguish arising from the oppression and encroachments of imperialism.

Incidentally, the birth of nationalist movements in various nations coincided with the period when the masses had a strong feeling of common suffering and a commonly shared sense of vacuum. German nationalism was born out of the discrimination practised by the French and their interference, which were felt painfully by the Germans. Nationalism in Italy, Hungary,

India, Indo-China and Algeria also emerged as a movement at a time when these nations, or at least the majority of their people, were seized by a common feeling of pain and vacuum.

Western scholars of Iranian history say that nationalism or awareness of national unity in Iran came into existence since the beginning of the Tobacco Movement, that is at the time when a section of the Iranian people felt the pinch of colonialism. Hence, a collective consciousness, a sense of nationhood or nationalism, is born among a group of people when they are possessed by a sense of common suffering combined with a common aspiration. The common aspiration gives rise to the common ideal, for attaining which a movement is initiated among the people, who strive and struggle together and are prepared to endure all kinds of injuries and deprivations. It is this aspiration which further strengthens their collective awareness at later stages, integrates them emotionally, and ultimately results in the nation's unification.

Factors of Unity:

If we study the sufferings that have been instrumental in the birth and emergence of nations up to our times, and compare them with each other, we find a common factor at work among all nations.

For instance, when we examine the circumstances that were responsible for the German philosopher Fichte's intense and enthusiastic campaign for arousing German nationalist sentiments, or the circumstances that compelled a Gandhi or a Garibaldi to struggle for the freedom of India or Italy, or the conditions under which the people of Vietnam and Palestine started their crusade for independence and liberty as remedies for the maladies afflicting them - these, and many other such instances, will show that whenever a people, or a group of it, arose in revolt and launched a struggle for freedom, two factors have been common in all the cases: firstly, a feeling of injury caused by the tyranny and domination of rulers and their institutions; and secondly, an urge to negate this domination. Fichte wanted to liberate the Germans from the political and cultural domination and influence of the French; Gandhi fought for freedom from British political, cultural and economic exploitation of his people and country; Algeria struggled against French occupation. Hence, the factor common among the sufferings and aspirations that lead to the emergence of the world's nations has been, on the one hand, the sense of suffering itself, and on the other, the will to eradicate injustice and establish a just order.

Why does it happen so often that nations are born during periods of unjust treatment, deprivation, oppression, aggression, exploitation and colonialism? It happens so because it is in difficult times, in deprivation, under denial of dignity and inhuman treatment and during endeavour and struggle for liberation from such circumstances that man's true nature is revealed to him; then he discovers his real identity and realizes the significance of sublime human values and merits. When man stands against tyranny, crime, oppression, unbelief and corruption and is moved to anguish and pain by them, the yearning for justice and truth is

awakened in the depths of his being. These are the values that unite and integrate humanity. Man is a being that is a lover of justice, piety and truth in the depths of his conscious being. This passion has been manifesting and expressing itself in all forms and colours at all points of space and time.

On this basis I feel inclined to say that it is the sense of deprivation, the realization of the gulf between the rulers and the ruled, which is the factor that demarcates human groups from one another and draws the real barriers between them.

Tiburmund,[5] a Western writer and researcher, also divides the present nations of the world into two camps, the deprived and the privileged, or the backward and the industrially advanced countries. This division and distinction, though it corresponds to the reality of our times, is not the whole truth. If we agree to divide humanity into the ruled and the ruling nations, we have to see if all the deprived nations stand in one camp. Frantz Fanon says in this matter: [6]

> Black chauvinism in Black literature is an emotional - if not logical - antithesis of the indignities that are heaped up on humanity by the White man. A revolt against the white man's contempt, it is, in some cases, the best means of overthrowing the restrictions and insults imposed upon the Blacks. As the intellectuals of Guinea and Kenya have more than anything else seen themselves face to face with total rejection and all round humiliation by the dominant power, their reaction is that of self-praise and self-glorification; the unquestioned justification of the African culture takes the place of un-conditional affirmation of the Western culture. The poets of the Black movement array the old and worn-out forces against the young Africa, morbid reason against poetry, and oppressive logic against ebullient nature. On the one side is violence, hostility and skepticism, and on the other purity, fervour, unity, freedom and the fertility and bounteousness of the earth, but also irresponsibility ...

The irresponsibility pointed out by Fanon results from the fact that the common suffering and aspiration that have emerged in African society are still weak in respect of perception of goals and objectives. The anti-imperialist movement of the Black continent against the injustice and oppression of the Whites, so far as it aims at uprooting injustice and discrimination and winning human rights, is sacred; but when it assumes the form of vengeance, pride and ambition and seeks privileges of a new kind, it also, in its own turn, lays down the foundation of a new injustice which has not yet found any outlet.

Hence the question of objectives also gains importance with regard to deprivation and slavery of nations. If the Black movement were to mature into devotion to truth and justice, then a rightly directed and blossoming movement will be its fruit. Therefore, the movements

and struggles motivated by common sufferings and aspirations are to be judged by their objectives: Whether they are governed by righteousness, justice, and freedom, or their objective is domination, new privileges and acquisition of benefits and advantages. This is something which is derived from the ideology, faith and outlook of the leaders of a national movement.

The Western culture excludes the above-mentioned factors from those which constitute collective consciousness and national awareness. The Eastern intellectual, too, be he a Muslim or an African, drenches his nationalism in the same colour and sees it with the eyes of the West. That is, with the same tools and weapons that are sold to him by the enemy he wants to build his nation and defend it. What a foolishness to buy one's weapons from the enemy!

Fortunately, in all nationalist movements and class struggles we witness another factor at work along with the awareness of common suffering and aspiration, and that is a yearning and love for justice, truth, and freedom. These two factors combined together can provide the criterion of a movement's rightfulness and legitimacy. German nationalism could not inspire and influence the people of other countries because it emerged with the objective of racialism and expansionism. Zionism, which appeared in its beginning as a movement for the liberation and freedom of the Jews from homelessness and international humiliation, has now assumed the form of an aggressive, racist and oppressive ideology. This movement, despite being the expression of the common suffering and aspirations of the Jews, due to its imperialist and exploitative objective of promoting the interests of twelve million Jews at the cost of the deprived people of the world, not only has no sympathizers but also invites the hatred of the freedom-loving people of the entire world. The nationalist resistance in France, with all its heroic tactics, not only failed to build any ideology or movement of liberation due to the source of its inspiration, which was French chauvinism, but also justified aggression against Algeria, its exploitation and the ruthless suppression of its liberation movement. The more prominent and dominant the elements of justice and righteousness in a nationalist movement, the greater was its universal appeal and the more did it contribute to the sources and foundations of universal human thought and civilization.

Hence, for determining and distinguishing different human societies with a view to determining their national identity and its boundaries, we should take into consideration all the factors; that is, their sufferings, the degree of their consciousness of their deprivation, the intensity of aspirations awakened by them, and, at last, their ultimate objective in its proper perspective. Then we will find that these are the factors which constitute the fountainhead of the life of a group of people and their movement and dynamism.

It is evident that these fundamental and essential factors, once they inspire the collective psyche and feelings of a people, prepare the foundation and the spirit of a nationalism. This foundation and spirit need a form and a body, which of necessity constitute the conventional natural and physical frontiers of a nation. The safeguarding of these fundamental and essential

factors depends on the security of those frontiers against the infiltration and encroachments of the foreign elements that are opposed to the very essence of a nation and either do not understand its sufferings and objectives or are hostile towards them.

The Birth of a New Nationality:

In our search for the basic factors that produce collective consciousness, we arrived at two points: common suffering and common aspiration in the face of domination and exploitation of man by man or his institutions. We also observed that these factors are not permanent unifiers unless infused by the yearning for justice, righteousness and piety (in the terminology of Western writers, the human and progress objectives). It is this vital essence which like life itself is living and is the augmenter of life, the élan vital. When this essence is injected into the body of a people or a group, it stimulates a collective movement, dynamism and evolution, resulting in the creative development of its culture and traditions, which are manifestations of a nation's independence and its distinct character.

In a considerably large part of our world, we see different nations with different languages, traditions, racial descent and living in geographically diverse conditions, which have formed numerous political units and separate and independent states. These are the world's Islamic nations. The classical Western criteria see them as different nationalities as alien to each other as they are to other nations and countries. Accordingly, these criteria require them to retain their separate identities and remain alien to one another. The consequences of this separation and alienation are observable for all. But despite the apparent differences they share certain elements that unite them. Among these people, the most prominent common factor is their faith, Islam, which is a world in itself, rich in culture and specific traditions.

We have to see how their attachment to Islam serves as a ground of common consciousness and unity; that is, what are the common goals and objectives which are taught and inspired by Islam as a creed and a world-view. Secondly, we have to find the common malaise that affects these nations despite their adherence to Islam. Let us review the teachings of the Quran in this regard:

> That which you serve apart from Him, is nothing but names which you have named, you and your fathers; God has sent down no authority touching them. Judgment belongs only to God, He has commanded that you shall not serve any but Him. This is the right religion; but most men know not. (12:40)
>
> O Men, a parable is set forth, so giue you ear to it. Surely those whom you call upon, apart from God, shall never create a fly, though they banded together to do it; and should a fly snatch away from them aught, they would never rescue it from it. Feeble indeed alike are the seeker and the sought! (22: 73)

> And struggle for God as is His due, for He has chosen you, and has laid on you no impediment in your religion, the creed of your father Abraham, He named you Muslims aforetime and in this, that the Messenger might be a witness upon you, and that you may might be witnesses upon mankind. So perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and hold you fast to God; He is your Protector - an excellent Protector, an excellent Helper. (22:78)

> O mankind, We have created you of a male and a female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you. God is All-knowing All-aware. (49:13)

> And hold you fast to God's bond, together, and do not scatter; remember God's blessing upon you when you were enemies, He united your hearts, so that by His blessing you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it; thus does God make clear to you His signs that you may follow the right way. (3:103)

> You are the best nation raised up for men; you enjoin what is good and forbid the wrong and believe in God. Had the people of the Book believed, it were better for them; some of them are believers, but most of them are transgressors. (3:110)

Those who have studied the history of liberation movements know that the independence of nations and peoples essentially depends upon an individual or a group, howsoever small it may be, that has completely liberated itself from the bondage of worldly temptations and attachments; these are the men who tell the people that if they wish to be dominated and ruled by the worldly powers they shall remain under their subjugation, but if they resolve to be free, all the rich and the powerful shall melt like ice and be destroyed. The basis of liberation is the conviction of the oppressed in their rightfulness and deprivation on the one hand, and the weakness and vulnerability of the forces of untruth on the other. What ideology can teach humanity the fundamentals of freedom in clearer and more evident terms? Tawhid and Islam mean liberation and freedom, freedom from all chains and bonds and opening of the avenues of man's evolution and upliftment towards the Divine.

Islam tells its followers that all the distinctions of colour, race and language that are observed among the nations of the world, and which have been made the criteria of their separation, are accidental, having no essential reality. On the whole, those people are noble and honourable who are advancing on the path of human perfection. The plurality of colours, languages and traditions in human society, and all the other differences observable in nature, are manifestations of the richness and variety of being and forms of a single reality. Every flower has its own colour and odour, its own properties and uses. But all are to be evaluated and

measured according to the criterion of their contribution to man's advancement towards his Supreme Source.

These differences and distinctions cannot be regarded as divisive factors; rather it is their coming together and getting to know one another (ta'aruf) that gives birth to material and spiritual development.

Whatever your race, territory or language, you share a common Law (Din), and it is your duty to safeguard this Divine Law with firmness and not to let yourselves be divided. Always remember God's blessing that earlier you were enemies of one another but after the spirit of Islam and tawhid was infused into you, you were united together. The fruit of this unity was a world full of knowledge, merit and moral excellence, which you brought as a gift for entire humanity. If you preach and defend virtue and fight against evil and corruption, you shall be the best of all nations. Either this material and social existence of yours will lead you to commit aggression against one another and oppression and exploitation of one another, or the same material and social existence of yours will become the source of your life, development and growth:

> O men your insolence is only against yourselves; the enjoyment of this world's life, then unto Us you shall return ... (10:23)

On the other hand, this very material existence is the source of your life and its development and evolution at both the individual and collective levels.

> The likeness of this world's life is only as water which We send down from the heaven, then the herbage of the earth, of which men and cattle eat, grows luxuriantly thereby, until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and becomes garnished ... (10:24)

Now since this worldly existence of yours in society is an admixture of evolution and transgression, in order not to give injustice and aggression any chances of growth, your remedy lies in this: With complete and perfect faith in the Unity and Sovereignty of God, with self-denial and willingness to sacrifice, take up arms and wage a perpetual, unceasing struggle against the sovereignty of wealth and against egoism.

> O believers, shall I direct you to a commerce that shall deliver you from a painful chastisement? You shall believe in God and His Messenger, and struggle in the way of God with your property and your lives. That is better for you, did you but know. (61:10-11)

In this way, the basis of your nationhood and the constituent of your collective consciousness is, firstly, faith in God (the objective), and, secondly, your jihad (the common anguish, which

at the level of action is translated into insurrection against untruth and preparedness for self-sacrifice).

> And (as for) those who believe, and have migrated and struggled in the way of God, and those who have given refuge and help, those in truth are believers they shall have forgiveness and generous provision. (8:74)

Study the history and fates of past and present nations; whatever they were and whatever they became was a result of their own individual and collective endeavours; you, Muslims, are also governed by the same law.

> This is a nation that has passed away; they have what they earned, and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did. (2:134)

In the end your destiny as human beings depends upon your efforts made in the way of sublimation towards your Lord, who is the highest representative of justice and truth, virtue and beauty. It is only after effort and endeavour that you will achieve the ultimate success of attaining His vision:

> O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him . (84:6)

The different Muslim nations, with all their present separation from each other, live under the influence of this kind of teaching so far as their world-view and objectives are concerned. And it is this teaching which forms the common culture of these peoples. It is this Islamic and tawhidi culture that has produced their heroes and martyrs, and has preserved the legacy and memorable epics that were woven into the fabric of their collective Islamic consciousness.

In the first century of the Islamic era the principles and objectives of Islamic tawhid were conveyed to the world in such clear and unambiguous terms that all the civilized people of those days, with all their fervour and awareness, embraced these teachings. Very soon the Islamic nation or rather the Islamic cosmopolitan society came into being. But this unity disappeared soon and divisions emerged, because the men who wielded power could not or did not wish to understand the real meaning of Islamic objectives. The Islamic international movement was perceived as an Arab empire and caliphate - a perception which was a flagrant violation of Islamic objectives. Because of this, the unity which was achieved was soon squandered, a defeat in whose wake appeared many upheavals, weaknesses and deviations, until, subsequently the Muslims went into a long and deep slumber.

Concurrent with this slumber was the awakening of the Christian West. By making abundant use of the Islamic traditions in culture, social life and science, the West laid the foundations

of its own culture, a culture which, apart from its indebtedness to the traditions and the scientific endeavours of the Islamic world, was motivated by worldly ambition, greed for wealth, urge for aggression and quest for worldly power. As a consequence, a few centuries ago the Islamic world came under the attack and exploitation of the enemies from the West. At first their cultural, moral and religious existence was threatened; then their material and economic resources were pillaged and plundered. The prolonged state of slumber, on the one hand, and the colonial onslaughts on the other, intensified the captivity of Muslim nations producing a defeatist mentality in them.

Now it is a hundred years that the cultural, social and political changes in the world have been shaking these nations and ringing the bell of alarm for them. They are, on the one hand, understanding the import of tawhid, Islam and its objectives from a new angle, and a new world of fresh truths is dawning upon them; on the other hand, the observation of the present conditions of Muslims and their misery, deprivation and backwardness is generating a fresh urge and aspiration among the Muslim masses. We are witnessing an awakening and movement in the captive Islamic countries. The liberating slogans and objectives of tawhid and Islam inspire and stimulate not only Muslims but also every oppressed people who become acquainted with Islamic teachings. Both in the newly-formed African countries and the Arab countries under the yoke of imperialism, Islam has emerged as a militant ideology of revolt and struggle for the oppressed people of the world.

Western civilization, which for centuries has been waging war openly as well as covertly against Islam, has sprung to its feet at the emergence of this phenomenon. As a result, the bourgeois imperialist West has adopted the stance of peaceful coexistence with the Marxist Eastern bloc. With its innate affinity with Zionism, it established a Zionist state in the heart of the Muslim world. On the other hand, it endeavours to win the hearts of the followers of other faiths, such as Buddhists and Zoroastrians. Today it appears that the West is busy in uniting all the forces opposed to Islam and justice and equipping them against the Muslims. It is for this reason that every now and then we see steps being taken and conspiracies being hatched, in every nook and cranny, to weaken the impact of Islamic slogans and teachings. As a consequence of all these conspiracies and unholy alliances, the sense of common anguish is growing amongst Muslims, strengthening further the fabric of their collective consciousness.

The Islamic outlook and the sense of suffering is expanding today and the Islamic nationhood is in the process of a rebirth, a nationhood that transcends the conventional age - old frontiers and embraces all Muslims, or rather all free and God-loving human beings. It is a nationhood which negates the sovereignty of every nation, tribe and family and is founded upon the freedom and liberty of man from every kind of intellectual, social and political bondage and upon his ascent to the heights of the abode of the Divine.

Men like 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, Muhammad 'Abduh, Na'ini, Iqbal and Bashir Ibrahimi are the pioneers of this new outlook of tawhid and Islam. They were the first to feel the new anguish and to spouse the Islamic aspiration; they were the

founders of a new nationhood based on tawhid. It is the lament of Iqbal Lahuri which like morning breeze awakens the slumbering hearts and unites the divided consciousness of the Muslim world, reminding it of its mission of magnanimous service to God's creation and bringing the good tidings of man's freedom and liberation:

> O sleeping bud, wake up to a narsissus-like vigilance over the world,
> Rise, for griefs have devastated our haven;
> Let the lament of the morning fowl and the dawn call of prayer wake you up;
> Rise, the fire-eaters are at work and the fire-balls hang in the air.
> Rise from heavy slumber, from heavy slumber arise!
> What an ocean is thine that is silent like a desert?
> What an ocean is that which swells not and falls like a lake?
> What an ocean is it that knows no storms and whales?
> Rise like a tidal wave from the split breast of the ocean!
> Rise from heavy slumber, from thine heavy slumber arise!
> Beware of the West and its bewitching coquetry!
> Beware of its disloyal charm and its Michiavellian malice!
> The world lies desolate from the savagery of the West!
> O builder of the Sanctuary, take up the task of building a new world!
> Rise from thine heavy slumber, from thine heavy slumber arise!
> From thine heavy slumber arise !

Notes:

1. J. J. Chivallier, les grandes oeuvres politiques troisieme partie.

2. Translator's note: Martyr Mutahhari has referred to the common Indian language as 'Hindi', but what he really means here is the expression of nationalist sentiments in Urdu during the Indian Freedom Movement. Usually no distinction is made in the Middle East between Urdu and Hindi. By 'Hindi' the people of this region mean the 'Indian language'.

3. In this context, refer to the writings of such intellectuals as Mirza Salih and Fath 'Ali Akhundzadeh from the early days of the Constitutional Movement and then those of Faridun Adamiyyat, or the steps taken by the government of Ataturk in modern Turkey.

4. Refer to such works as: Parwin, dukhtar-e Sasan, Az in Awesta, Do qarn-e sukut, Mah-e Nakhshab, Majmu'ah-ye Iran-e bastan, and Majmu'ah-ye Iran kudeh.

5. Triburmund, Jahani miyan-e tars wa umid (Persian translation).

6. Frantz Fanon, Les damn'ees de la terre: de la culture nationale.

Towards a Definition of Terrorism

Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali Taskhiri

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> * Terrorism is a term that has been much bandied about in recent times in the world media. This paper was presented by the author, who is Director of the International Relations Department of the I.P.O., at the International Conference on Terrorism called by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Geneva, from June 22-26, 1987. It is an attempt to define terrorism and to put it in a broad perspective.

Resolution 20/5-P (1.5) of the Fifth Islamic Summit supported the idea of an international conference to be convened under the aegis of the United Nations in order to discuss the subject of international terrorism and to differentiate it from the struggle of peoples for their acknowledged national causes and the liberation of their territories.

This means that we should, at this meeting, take into consideration the following steps:

(i) To refer, first of all, to Islamic sources in order to set the major criteria, to identify the principles according to which the humanity aims and actions is to be assessed, and to make such principles the basis of our judgement in the various cases.

(ii) To examine genuine human nature unblemished by any considerations of narrow interests, in order to identify human rules that can be put forth at the international level as a general human criterion For this purpose, the results of our studies must cover the various fields of the international scene and constitute a general action framework.

(iii) From these Islamic and human principles, we deduce a general comprehensive and exclusive definition, i.e. encompassing all the real attributes of terrorism and excluding the alleged criteria of terrorism which cannot be treated as such by lofty principles.

(iv) Then, we should apply the criteria set forth to all the national and international instances of alleged terrorism. We should examine each of them closely in the light of the results, then put forward an appropriate and precise judgement which is free from any ambiguity or

connivance and to confer on each act its true adjective.

In the light of this introduction, we shall confine our study to the following points:

First Point:

It goes without saying that every international bloc, every State or indeed every community has enemies and opponents that seek to eliminate it, and, as the conflict becomes violent, each party tries to undermine the reputation of the other by attributing to it repulsive epithets, such as "anarchist", "criminal", "outlaw", "inhuman", "terrorist", and the like.

We may even find that each of the two parties indulges in such allegations in order to carry out a plan which involves the deprival of the other party of its rights on the pretext of collaborating with the enemy or plotting against lawful interests.

To materialize this process, each party uses its international influence in order to win other parties over to its side either in action or in terms of support in international fora. The issue thus assumes a public character and the victory in a case is a matter of pressure, influence and the power of persuasion rather than a matter of sound logic.

Accordingly, feelings are influenced and sentiments are exploited for the implementation of such plans motivated by self-interest, under the banner of "anti-terrorism" for instance. To be sure, terrorism is humanly reprehensible (if we disregard its motives and objectives), and no one in his senses would accept any threat to human dignity, freedom, property, honour, security, work, etc. This feeling is instinctive, genuine and incontestable.

Second Point:

If we consider the meaning of the word "terrorism" on the one hand, and its fallout and traces left on human life on the other, we note that terrorism may be carried out on different levels. There is a terrorism which threatens security, honour, property and the like; there is a cultural terrorism which tears human identity apart, and leads to the abyss of perdition and aimlessness; there is an information terrorism which deprives man of his freedom to breathe in an unpolluted atmosphere. We can cite other types of terrorism such as economic terrorism, scientific terrorism, diplomatic terrorism, military terrorism, etc.

There exists, however, a division based on the type of perpetrators, which must be taken into account. It is the division into official and unofficial terrorism. Official terrorism - which is the more dangerous - consists of all acts that are supported by an internationally recognized quarter or State, whether by the army of that State or individual elements or in the form of an operation for the benefit of the said quarter. Opposing this type of terrorism is unofficial

terrorism.

Third Point:

We may focus, in any act or conduct, on two determining factors:

1. The motives of the perpetrator.

2. The human acceptability of the act itself.

These are not inseparable aspects. The personal motives of the perpetrator may look humane to him but not so to the public. Conversely, the perpetrator may have no human purpose in mind or may indeed have a purpose that he perceives to be inhumane but is considered from the public point of view to be a humane act.

Therefore, viewpoints may differ in the judgement whether such an act is good or evil (usuli jurisprudents have done a great deal of valuable research on the rational basis of differentiating between good and evil deeds, but this is not the place to go into it). What must be stated here is that neither of the factors, taken separately, is sufficient to determine the acceptability or the reprehensibility of an act or to judge such an act positively or negatively. A positive assessment in regard to both factors must be carried out in order to judge and act.

Consequently, we have to ensure objectivity in our investigation in order to find a criterion for identifying the acceptability and humanity of an act from the standpoints of both Islam and mankind in general.

As regards the Islamic standpoint, we have to refer to the principles, concepts and judgements which relate to the question of terrorism - in its literal sense - to give a general definition of condemnable terrorism, i.e. the terrorism that is rejected by Islam as contrary to the process of the human being's perfection determined by God Almighty for mankind through human nature and prescribed through revelation.

When referring to Islamic teachings, we find that Islam is very rich in this field, and we notice that Islamic jurists have delved into the various aspects that relate to the subject.

We have the judgements on al-baghy, i.e. armed revolt by a group against a just and legitimate government, intimidation of the general public, and pursuit of divisive political goals that damage national unity.

We also have the judgements on al-harabah, which is defined as "the use of weapons, on land or sea, by day or night, to intimidate people, in a city or elsewhere, by a male or female,

strong or weak." God Almighty declares in the Qur'an:

> This is the recompense of those who fight against God and His Messenger, and spread corruption in the land. they shall be put to death, or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the land. That is a degradation for them in this world; and in the next awaits them a mighty chastisement (5:33)

As may be noticed, the verse mentions the subject and the purpose, namely war against society and spreading of corruption in the land. It has also mentioned the severe punishment to be dealt out to the perpetrators, which points to Islam's concern for the subject.

There are also the laws about theft and murder which can be mentioned in this regard. Likewise, we come across in Islamic texts terms which relate to the matter at hand, such as homicide (al-fatk), deceit (al-ghilah), and seditious conspiracy (al-'i'timar).

There are also texts which stipulate utmost respect for covenants and treaties even if it is discovered later that they favour the other party. As long as he adheres to their provisions, these must be observed.

Furthermore, we have the requirements of the Islamic ethical system which consists of concepts unknown to positive law yet are deeply-rooted in this system. Lying may, for instance, reach the degree of a major sin and so may calumny. We thus find that Islam seeks earnestly to protect all kinds of true human freedoms, and to defend the dignity of the individual and society, as well as the cohesion of society and integrity of the family, considering any attack on them to be an atrocious crime liable to the sternest punishment which may go as far as execution, crucifixion and the like.

Islam upholds the principle of personal responsibility and considers any attack on innocent people as a major crime. It focuses on the defence of the weak, the humble and the oppressed and enjoins jihad for their protection:

> And why should you not fight for the cause of Allah, and for the helpless old men and women.... (4:75)

The Muslim is required to always stand up for the oppressed until they get their rights. Imam 'Ali (A) gave this advice to his two sons:

> Be opponents of the oppressor and defenders of the oppressed.

He also said:

> To me the lowly are noble until I get their rights for them, and the powerful are weak until I get such rights from them.

Perhaps the mention in the Holy Qur'an of the blessing of security "And hath made them safe from fear" (106:4) is the best proof of the importance it attaches to security.

However, it would take too long to elaborate on all the related matters. Nevertheless we wish to state that the first criterion for identifying humaneness is the intention of the perpetrator and the general acceptability of his act is Din with all its spirit, laws and concepts.

Turning our attention to the second framework, namely the general human framework, we can accept those principles that are unanimously respected by mankind as represented by its official organs, its popular organizations, its conscience and sentiments, as another set of criteria to determine the presence of humaneness or its opposite in the intention of the perpetrator, and of the above-mentioned general acceptability (although we believe the two criteria to be mostly overlapping).

As an example of the foregoing, we may notice the present unanimity of mankind in considering the following as inhuman:

- prostitution and the disintegration of family relationships;
- narcotics and the disintegration of individual's rational personality;
- colonialism and the undermining of peoples' dignity and plundering of their resources;
- racism and the disintegration of human brotherhood;
- violation of all recognized rights and the breaking of covenants:
- bombardment of populated areas, use of chemical weapons. attacks on civil aviation, national railways, commercial and tourist vessels, and similar methods which are universally condemned in war.

There is no divergence whatsoever as regards the anti-human nature of the above instances. Therefore, these and similar violations suggest the acceptable criteria which should form the basis of our definition, and any act to eliminate and oppose them is a human act which must be supported if itself not accompanied by violation of other human values.

Fourth Point: Definition of Terrorism

In the light of the above, we can arrive at a comprehensive definition of terrorist acts, a definition which is unanimously acceptable and on which we can base our positions. Yet before putting forth our suggested definition, we may recall that we should note therein the following elements:

- intimidation and violation of security of any kind;
- presence of inhuman intention and motive;
- unacceptability of the end and purpose and the act itself by humanity.

Accordingly, our definition may be as follows:

> Terrorism is an act carried out to achieve an inhuman and corrupt (mufsid) objective, and involving threat to security of any kind, and violation of rights acknowledged by religion and mankind.

For the sake of clarity, we may add the following points:

1. We have used the term 'human' instead of 'international' for the sake of wider consensus, official or otherwise, so as to emphasize the general human character of the statement.

2. We have introduced the epithet 'corrupt' (mufsid) to connote the attribute accompanying inhuman objectives, i.e. the spreading of corruption in the land, and to include the imperative to avoid such objectives.

3. We have referred to various types of terrorism with the phrase; "security of any kind".

4. We have mentioned the two criteria, i.e. religious and human, first to be consistent with our belief and then to generalize the criterion.

5. As may be noticed, the fact that an operation is violent does not constitute a condition for considering it a case of terrorism. In the light of the above definition, we shall be able to ascertain the nature of one act or another and determine whether it is a case of terrorism. We shall confirm that the definition does not apply to the following:

> a. acts of national resistance exercised against occupying forces, colonizers and usurpers;
>
> b. resistance of peoples against cliques imposed on them by the force of arms;

c. rejection of dictatorships and other forms of despotism and efforts to undermine their institutions;

d. resistance against racial discrimination and attacks on the latter's strongholds;

e. retaliation against any aggression if there is no other alternative.

Similarly, the definition does not apply to any democratic action unaccompanied by terrorism even if it does not have a humane objective. Nor does it apply to individual destructive acts if they have no social effects.

The above definition, however, does apply to the following:

a. acts of piracy on land, air and sea;

b. all colonialist operations including wars and military expeditions;

c. all dictatorial acts against peoples and all forms of protection of dictatorships, not to mention their imposition on nations;

d. all military methods contrary to human practice, such as the use of chemical weapons, the shelling of civilian populated areas, the blowing up of homes, the displacement of civilians, etc.;

e. all types of pollution of geographical, cultural and informational environment. Indeed, intellectual terrorism may be one of the most dangerous types of terrorism;

f. all moves that undermine adversely affect the condition of international or national economy, adversely affect the condition of the poor and the deprived, deepen up nations with the shackles of socio-economic gaps, and chain up nations with the shackles of exorbitant debts;

g. all conspiratorial acts aimed at crushing the determination of nations for liberation and independence, and imposing disgraceful pacts on them.

The list of examples that fit in with the suggested definition is almost endless.

Fifth Point:

Although many meetings have been held and many attempts made to combat terrorism, they

have generally failed because of the following reasons:

- They were not based on international human considerations but were aimed primarily at achieving narrow interests.

- They did not deal with the circumstances that generate terrorism, nor did they seek the real motives of terrorism. It is indeed comical that the United States of America, which is the mother of international terrorism, and the author of all the circumstances of oppression and subjection of peoples, by strengthening dictatorial regimes and supporting occupation of territories and savage attacks on civilian areas, etc. should seek to convene symposia on combating "terrorism", i.e. any act that conflicts with its imperialist interests.

> Killing a person in a forest is an unforgivable sin,
> But the massacre of a peaceful nation is a debatable question.

At any rate, the real cure of terrorism - acts of individual terrorism in particular - consists, in our view, in removing the conditions that have brought it about.

Islam, in its treatment of all cases of deviation, strongly stresses this aspect. It seeks first to reform the social atmosphere and eliminate all inducements to crime. It also emphasizes self-restraint through education of the innermost soul and through giving the latter a unique human mould that causes it to spontaneously shun any transgression of prescribed human norms and rules by the Shari'ah. In addition, Islam does not omit to lay down a comprehensive, realistic and flexible code of sanctions that deals with facts according to their social effects.

Going back to our current reality, we must seek the prevalence of a just system and prevent aggression and encroachment upon other peoples' rights. Under such circumstances when a person allows himself to be induced to commit terrorism or aggression, the whole mankind will stand up against him. If, however, we fail to fulfil this standard, all our treatments will be local and palliative; though they may alleviate pain, they will not eradicate the cause of the disease.

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The Causes Responsible for Materialist

tendencies in the West I of IV [1]

Translated from the Persian by Mujahid Husayn

Martyr Murtadha Mutahhari

(Vol XII and XIII)

Materialism:

The topic of the present study are the causes that lie behind materialist tendencies. Before we proceed with the discussion it is necessary that we first define the word 'materialism,' as a term current in common usage, and specify its exact meaning for the purpose of the present discussion.

The word 'materialism' has various usages and all of them are not relevant to our study while studying the cause for materialist inclinations. For example, at times 'materialism' is used to refer to the school of thought which asserts the principiality of matter in the sense that matter is something fundamental (asil) and real in the realm of existence and not something imaginary and mental, an appearance and a product of the mind. In this sense it is opposed to 'idealism' which negates the real existence of matter and considers it a mental construct. In this sense of materialism, we would have to categorize all theists, both Muslims as well as non-Muslims, as 'materialists,' because all of them consider matter-as a reality existing in space and time and subject to change, transformation, and evolution, and which is also perceivable and tangible-as an objective reality existing externally and independently of the mind and having its own properties. Being a 'materialist' in this sense does not contradict with the concept of God or monotheism. Rather, the material world and nature as a product of creation constitute the best means for knowing God. The workings of Divine will and wisdom are discovered in the transformations which take place in matter, and the Holy Qur'an, too, refers to material phenomena as the 'signs' of God.

Sometimes this word is used to imply the negation of supra-material being, as an exclusivist school of thought which considers existence and the realm of being as confined to matter, confining being to the realm of the changeable and limiting it to space and time. It negates the

existence of all that does not fall within the framework of change and transformation and is not perceivable by the sense organs.

Our present discussion centres around the causes for inclining towards this exclusivist school of thought, and the reasons why a group of people became protagonists of this exclusivist and negative theory, negating God and imagining anything outside the ambit of the material world as non-existent.

Is Man by Nature a Theist or a Materialist?

This manner of posing the issue, i.e with the question 'What are the causes for inclining towards materialism?,' suggests that we claim that man by nature would not incline towards materialism, and that materialism is an unnatural tendency opposed to human nature (fitrah). And since it goes against the rule, it is necessary to seek its cause and to investigate the reasons which have led to the violation of the rule.

To put it more simply, it implies that faith in God is equivalent to the state of health, and the materialist tendency is equivalent to disease. One never asks about the reasons of health, because it is in accordance with the general course of nature. But if we come across a person or a group which is sick, we ask as to why they are sick. What is the cause of their illness?

This viewpoint of ours is completely opposed to the view usually expressed in books on history of religion. The writers of these books generally tend to pursue the question, 'Why did man develop the religious tendency?'

In our opinion, the religious tendency does not need to be questioned, because it is natural; rather, the question that needs to be examined is why do human beings develop tendencies towards irreligion?

Presently we do not intend to pursue the argument whether being religious is something natural and the lack of religion unnatural, or if the converse is true, because we see no need for doing so from the point of view of the main topic of our discussion.

However, it is worth noting that we do not mean that, as the monotheistic tendency is natural and innate (fitrah), no questions arise when the issue is dealt with at the intellectual and philosophical level. This is certainly not meant. This matter is just like every other issue that naturally- and despite affirmation by natural instinct-gives rise to questions, objections and doubts in the mind of a beginner when posed at the rational level, and satisfying answers to them are also available at that level.

Therefore, we neither intend to disregard the doubts and ambiguities which do in fact arise for individuals, nor do we consider them consequences of an evil disposition or ill-naturedness.

Not at all. The emergence of doubts and ambiguities in this context, when someone seeks to solve all the problems related to this issue, is something natural and usual, and it is these doubts that impel human beings towards further quest. Accordingly we consider such doubts which result in further search for truth as sacred, because they constitute a prelude to the acquisition of certitude, faith, and conviction. Doubt is bad where it becomes an obsession and completely absorbs one's attention, as with some people whom we find enjoying the fact that they are able to have doubt concerning certain issues and who consider doubt and uncertainty to be the zenith of their intellectual achievement. Such a state is very dangerous, contrary to the former state which is a prelude to perfection. Therefore, we have said repeatedly that doubt is a good and necessary passage, but an evil station and destination.

Our present discussion concerns the individuals or groups who have made doubt their abode and final destination. In our opinion, materialism, although it introduces itself as a dogmatic school of thought, is in fact one of the sceptic schools. The Qur'an also takes this view of the materialists, and according to it they are, at best, beset with a number of doubts and conjectures, but in practice they flaunt them as knowledge and conviction. [2]

The Historical Background:

This mode of thinking is not new or modern. It should not be imagined that this mode of thought is a consequence of modern scientific and industrial developments and has emerged for the first time during the last one or two centuries, like many other scientific theories which did not exist earlier and were later discovered by man. No, the materialist thinking among human beings is not a phenomenon of the last few centuries, but is one of the ancient modes of thought. We read in the history of philosophy that many ancient Greek philosophers who preceded Socrates and his philosophical movement, were materialists and denied the supra-material.

Among the Arabs of the Jahillyyah contemporaneous to the Prophet's ministry there was a group with a similar belief, and the Qur'an, while confronting them, quotes and criticizes their statements:

> They say, 'There is nothing but our present life; we die, and we live, and nothing but time destroys us.' (45:24).

This statement, which the Qur'an ascribes to a group of people, involves both the negation of God as well as the Hereafter.

Materialism in Islamic History:

The word 'dahr' means time. Due to this verse and the term dahr occurring in it, those who

negated the existence of God were called 'dahriyyah' during the Islamic period. We encounter such people in Islamic history who were dhari and materialists (maddi), especially during the reign of the Abbassids, when various cultural and philosophical trends entered the Islamic world.

Due to the freedom of thought which prevailed during that period with respect to scientific, philosophical and religious ideas (of course, to the extent that it did not contradict the policies of the Abbassids), some individuals were formally known as materialists and atheists. These individuals debated with Muslims, with the adherents of other religions, and with believers in the existence of God, and presented their arguments and raised objections concerning the arguments of the monotheists. Thus they did enter into dialogue and freely expressed their beliefs, and we find their accounts recorded in Islamic works.

During the lifetime of Imam Sadiq, may Peace be upon him, there were certain individuals who used to gather inside the Prophet's Mosque and express such views. The book al-Tawhid al-Mufaddal is a product one of such episodes.

A companion of Imam Sadiq ('a) named al-Mufaddal ibn 'Umar narrates: "Once I was in the Prophet's Mosque. After prayer I became engrossed in thought about the Prophet (S) and his greatness. Just then 'Abd al-Karim ibn Abi al 'Awja', who was an atheist (zindiq), came and sat down at some distance. Later another person holding similar views pined him, and both of them started uttering blasphemies. They denied the existence of God and referred to the Prophet (S) simply as a great thinker and a genius and not as a Divine emissary and apostle who received revelations from an Unseen source. They said that he was a genius who presented his ideas as revelation in order to influence the people; otherwise there was no God, nor any revelation or resurrection."

Mufaddal, who was greatly disturbed on hearing their talk, abused them. Then he went to Imam Sadiq, may Peace be upon him, and narrated the incident. The Imam comforted him and told him that he would furnish him with arguments with which he could confront them and refute their views. Thereafter Imam Sadiq ('a) instructed Mufaddal in the course of a few long sessions and Mufaddal wrote down the Imam's teachings. This was how the book al-Tawhid al-Mufaddal came to be compiled.

Materialism in the Modern Age:

As we know, during the 18th and 19th centuries materialism took the form of a school of thought which it did not have earlier. That which is ascribed to some schools of ancient Greece does not have a proper basis. Usually the writers of history of philosophy do not know philosophy, and when they come across certain statements of some philosophers concerning the pre-eternity of matter or some other opinions of the kind, they imagine that this amounts to the negation of God and the supra-natural. It has not been established for us that there

existed a materialist school of thought before the modern age. Rather, what did exist earlier in Greece and elsewhere were individual tendencies towards materialism.

However, this is what has led many people to suppose that perhaps there is some direct relation between the emergence of materialism as a school of thought and science and scientific advancements.

Of course, the materialists themselves make a great effort to present the matter as such, and they try to convince others that the cause of the growth and prevalence of materialism during the 18th and 19th centuries was the emergence of scientific theories and that it was the spread of science which resulted in mankind being drawn towards it. This observation resembles a joke more than any noteworthy fact.

The inclination towards materialism in ancient times existed both among the educated as well as the illiterate classes. In the modern age, too, the case is similar. Materialists can be found in all classes, and likewise there are theistic, spiritual and metaphysical inclinations in all classes and sections, especially among the learned. If what the materialists claim were true, in the same proportion that advances are made in science and great scientists are born in the world, there should be an increase in the inclination towards materialism among the scholarly class, and individuals possessing more scholarship should be greater materialists, while in fact this is not the case.

Today, we see on the one hand some well well-known personalities like Russell, who, to a large extent, present themselves as materialists. He says, "Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms." [3] Thus Russell rejects the existence of a conscious and intelligent power ruling the universe, although at other places he avers to be a skeptic and an agnostic. [4]

On the other hand, we find Einstein, the twentieth century scientific genius, expressing an opinion opposed to that of Russell; he says "You will hardly find one among the profounder sort of scientific minds without a religious feeling of his own ... His religious feeling takes the form of rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work, in so far as he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desire. It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages." [5]

Can it be said that Russell is familiar with the concepts of modern science whereas Einstein is ignorant of them? Or that a certain philosopher of the 18th or l9th century was familiar with the scientific concepts of his age whereas the theist Pasteur was unaware and ignorant of

them?!

Or can we say that William James, the monotheist or rather the mystic of his time, Bergson, Alexis Carrell and other such thinkers were ignorant of the scientific ideas of their time and their thinking was in tune with the ideas of a thousand years ago, while a certain Iranian youth who does not possess a tenth of their knowledge and does not believe in God is familiar with the scientific ideas of his age?!

At times one sees two mathematicians, one of whom believes in God and religion while the other is a materialist, or for that matter two physicists, two biologists, or two astronomers, one with a materialist and the other with a theistic bent of mind.

Therefore, it is not that simple to say that the advent of science has made metaphysical issues obsolete. That would be a childish observation.

We need to centre our discussion more on the question as to what were the factors that led to the emergence of materialism as a school of thought in Europe, attracting a large number of followers, even though the 20th century, in contrast to the 18th and 19th centuries, saw a decline in the advance of materialism and in it materialism even met with a kind of defeat?

This large-scale drift has a series of historical and social causes which require to be studied. I have come across some of these causes during the course of my study which I shall mention here. Perhaps those who have done a closer study of social issues, especially in the area of European history, would identify other reasons and factors. Here I only intend to discuss the results of my study.

Inadequacies in the Religious Ideas of the Church

The Church, whether from the viewpoint of the inadequacy of its theological ideas, or its inhuman attitude towards the masses, especially towards the scholars and freethinkers, is one of the main causes for the drifting of the Christian world, and indirectly the non-Christian world, towards materialism.

We will analyze this factor in two sections:
1. Inadequacies in the ideas of the Church relating to God and the metaphysical.
2. The violent conduct of the Church.

Section 1:

In the Middle Ages when the clerics became the sole arbiters of issues relating to divinities, there emerged amongst them certain childish and inadequate ideas concerning God which

were in no way consonant with reality. Naturally, these not only did not satisfy intelligent and enlightened individuals, but created in them an aversion against theism and incited them against theist thought.

Anthropomorphic Conceptions of God:

The Church painted a human picture of God and presented Him to the people in an anthropomorphic form. Those who were brought up to conceive God with these human and physical features under the influence of the Church, later, with advances in science, came to find that these ideas were inconsistent with scientific, objective, and sound rational criteria.

On the other hand, the vast majority of people naturally do not possess such power of critical analysis as to reflect over the possibility that metaphysical ideas might have a rational basis and that the Church was wrongly presenting them.

Thus when they saw that the views of the Church did not conform to the criteria of science they rejected the issue outright.

There is a book titled The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe, consisting of forty articles by forty scientists belonging to various fields of specialization, wherein each scholar has presented arguments proving the existence of God in accordance with has own specialized area of study. This book has been translated into Persian.

Among these scholars is Walter Oscar Lundberg, who presents a scientific argument for the existence of God. In the course of his study he examines why some people, including scholars, have developed a materialist tendency.

He mentions two causes of which one has been already mentioned by us, inadequate ideas taught on this subject to the people in the church or at home.

Our singling out the churches in this regard does not mean to imply that those who give instruction on religious issues from our pulpits (manabir) and mosques have always been informed and competent individuals who know what is to be taught and possess an in-depth knowledge of Islam. One reason why we mention only the church is that our discussion is about the causes behind materialist inclinations and these tendencies existed in the Christian world and not in the Islamic environments. Whatever materialism is found in Islamic societies has been, and is, the result of copying and imitating the West. Secondly, there existed in the Islamic milieu a school of thought at the level of philosophers and metaphysicians, which satisfied the intellectual needs of the researchers and saved the scholars from the fate of their counterpart in Europe, while there existed no such school within the Church.

In any case this is what Walter Oscar Lundberg says

> There are various reasons for the attention of some scholars not being drawn towards comprehending the existence of God while undertaking scientific studies; we will mention just two of them here. The first (reason) is the general presence of oppressive political and social conditions or governmental structures which necessitate the negation of the existence of God. The second (reason) is that human thinking is always under the impact of some vague ideas and although the person himself may not undergo any mental and physical agony, even then his thinking is not totally free in choosing the right path. In Christian families the children in their early years generally believe in an anthropomorphic God, as if man has been created in the image of God. These persons, on entering a scientific environment and acquiring the knowledge of scientific issues, find that this weak and anthropomorphic view of God does not accord with scientific concepts. Consequently, after a period of time when the hope of any compromise is dashed, the concept of God is also totally discarded and vanishes from the mind. The major cause of doing so is that logical proofs and scientific definitions do not alter the past sentiments and beliefs of these persons, and it does not occur to them that a mistake had taken place in the earlier belief about God. Along with this, other psychic factors cause the person to become weary of the insufficiency of this concept and turn away from theology. [6]

Summarily, that which is observable in certain religious teachings-and regrettably is also found amongst ourselves, to a more or less extent-is that a characteristic concept is projected in the minds of children under the name and label of 'God.' When the child grows up and becomes a scholar, he finds that this concept is not rational and such a being cannot exist, whether it be God or something else.

The child on growing up, without reflecting or critically concluding that perhaps there might exist a valid conception, rejects the idea of divinity altogether. He imagines that the concept of God he is rejecting is the same as the one accepted by theists, and since he does not accept this creature of his own mind, which is the product of popular superstition, he does not believe in God. He does not notice that the concept of God which he is rejecting is also rejected by the theists, and that his rejection is not the rejection of God but is the rejection of something that ought to be rejected.

Flammarion in the book God and Nature observes: "The Church presented God in this manner: 'The distance between his right and left eye is 12000 leagues.' " It is obvious that persons with even a meagre knowledge of science cannot believe in such a being.

Auguste Comte's Conception of God:

Flammarion quotes a statement of Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism and what is known as scientism, which offers a good view of the way God was pictured by such scholars

as Auguste Comte living in the Christian environment of that time. Flammarion says: Auguste Comte has said: "Science has dismissed the Father of nature and the universe from his post, consigning him to oblivion, and while thanking him for his temporary services, it has escorted him back to the frontiers of his greatness."

What he means is that earlier every event that took place in the world was explained by relating it to God as its cause. For example, if someone got a fever, the question why the fever had come about and from where it came had the answer that God had sent the fever. That which was commonly understood by this statement was not that it is God who governs the universe and that to say that He had caused the fever implied that He was the real and ultimate mover of the world. Rather, this statement meant that God, like a mysterious being, or a magician engaged in sorcery, had all of a sudden decided to cause fever without any preparatory cause, and so the fever came about. Later science discovered its cause and it was observed that fever was not brought about by God, but by a certain bacteria.

Here God retreated one step. Henceforth the theist was forced to say that we will shift our argument to the bacteria: Who created the bacteria?

Science also discovered the cause of bacteria by identifying the conditions in which they come to exist. Again God had to retreat one step, and the argument proceeded by asking the cause of that cause. God's retreat continued, and, at last, with the spread and expansion of science the causes of a large number of phenomena were discovered. Even those phenomena whose causes were not yet discovered were known for certain to possess causes belonging to the category of causes already known. Thereat man had to dismiss God for good with an apology, because there no longer remained any place and post for Him.

The state of God at this stage was that of an employee in an office in which he was initially given an important post, but with the recruitment of more competent individuals his responsibilities were gradually taken away, and eventually, when he was divested of all his earlier responsibilities, there remained no post and place left for him. At this time the manager of the office approaches him, thanks him for his past services, and with an excuse hands him the dismissal orders and bids him farewell once and for all.

Auguste Comte uses the term 'Father of nature' for God. His use of this term for God shows the influence of the Church in his thought. Although he was against the teachings of the Church, his own concept of God was derived from the Church's ideas, from which he was not able to free himself.

Taken together, the observations of Auguste Comte suggest that in his opinion God is something similar to a part and factor of this world, albeit mysterious and unknown, by the side of other factors. Moreover, there are two types of phenomena in the world, the known and the unknown. Every unknown phenomenon should be linked to that mysterious and

unknown factor. Naturally, with the discovery of every phenomenon and its becoming known as a consequence of science, the domain of influence of the unknown factor is diminished.

This mode of thinking was not characteristic of him, but it was the thinking that prevailed in his environment and era.

The Station of Divinity:

Hence the main thing is that we ascertain the station of Divinity and comprehend the place, position and 'post' of God. Is the position of God and the Divine in the realm of being such that we may consider Him to be one of the beings in the world and a part of it? May we allot Him a certain function among the various functions that exist in the world, thereby affecting a division of labour, and then, for determining God's special function, examine the various effects whose causes are unknown to us, so that whenever we come across an unknown cause we have to attribute it to God? The consequence of such a mode of thinking is to search for God among things unknown to us. Naturally, with an increase in our knowledge, the area of our ignorance will continually diminish and the domain of our theism, too, will diminish to the point where if some day, supposedly, all the unknown things become known to mankind, there would remain no place for God or any theism.

In accordance with this line of reasoning, only some of the existing realities are signs of God and manifest and mirror His existence, and they are those whose causes are unknown. As to those things whose causes have been identified, they lie outside the realm of signs and indications of the Divine Being.

Hallowed be God! How wrong and misleading this kind of thinking is, and how ignorant it is of the station of the Divine! Here we should cite the words of the Qur'an, which observes in this regard:

They measured not God with His true measure. (6:91)

The ABC of theism is that He is the God of the entire universe and is equally related to all things. All things, without any exception, are manifestations of His Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Will, and Design, and are the signs and marks of His Perfection, Beauty and Glory. There is no difference between phenomena whose causes are known and those whose causes are unknown in this regard. The universe, with all its systems and causes, is in toto sustained by His Being. He transcends both time and space. Time and time-bound entities, and similarly space and spatial objects, irrespective of their being finite or infinite-that is, whether they are temporally limited or extend from pre-eternity to eternity, and regardless of whether the universe is limited in its spatial dimensions or infinite, and, ultimately, whether the entire expanse of existents is finite or infinite in time and space-all these are posterior to His Being and Existence and are Considered among His emanations (fayd.)

Hence it is extreme ignorance to think in a Church like manner and to imagine, like Auguste Comte, that while looking for the cause of a certain phenomenon in some corner of the universe we would suddenly discover the existence of God, and then celebrate and rejoice that we have found God at a certain place. And if we do not succeed and are unable to so find Him, we should become pessimistic and deny God's existence altogether.

On the contrary, it is precisely in this sense that we must reject the existence of God, that is, a God who is like any other part of the world and is discoverable like any other phenomenon in the course of inquiry into the world's phenomena is certainly not God, and any belief in such a God is aptly rejected.

In more simple terms, we should say that this kind of quest for God in the universe is like the conduct of someone who when shown a clock and told that it has a maker wants to find its maker within the wheels and parts of the clock. He searches for a while and on finding nothing except its different parts, says: 'I did not find the maker of the clock and this proves that he does not exist.' Or it is like one who on being shown a beautifully stitched dress and told that this dress was stitched by a tailor, says, 'If I find the tailor in the pockets of this dress I will accept his existence, otherwise I won't.'

This kind of thinking is totally wrong from the Islamic point of view. From the viewpoint of Islamic teachings, God is not on a par with the natural causes so that the question should arise whether a certain external entity has been created by God or by a certain natural cause. This kind of dichotomy is both wrong and meaningless, because there cannot be a dichotomy or an intervening 'or' between God and natural causes for such a question to be posed. This form of thinking is anti-theist. Theism means that the whole of nature in its entirety is a unit of work and an act of God in its totality. Hence it is not correct to ask concerning a part of it whether it is a work of God or nature, and then to consider it to be a work of God on failing to identify its cause, and as related to nature and with no connection with God when its natural cause is known.

Auguste Comte's Three Stages of Human History:

Auguste Comte suggests a classification of the stages of the historical development of the human mind, which, most regrettably, has more or less been accepted, though from the point of view of those acquainted with Islamic philosophy it is mere childish talk. He says that mankind has passed through three stages:

1. The Theological Stage:

In this stage man explained phenomena by resorting to supernatural forces and considered God or gods to be the cause of every phenomenon. In this stage man discovered the principle

of causality, but was not able to identify the causes of things in a detailed manner. Since he had grasped the principle of causality, he considered the cause of every event to lie within Nature. In this stage he postulated the existence of forces in Nature with the judgement that certain forces exist in Nature which are ultimately responsible for the occurrence of phenomena.

2. The Metaphysical Stage

In this stage, in view of the fact that man thought in metaphysical and philosophical terms, he could not go beyond the assertion that a certain event had a cause without having any answer to the question about the nature and character of the cause itself.

3. The Positive Stage:

In this stage man identified in detail the causes of things in Nature. During this stage, man turned away from thinking in general philosophical terms and adopted the experimental approach to the study of phenomena, discovering the causal links between them. It became completely evident to him that the phenomena are related to one another in a chain. Today science considers this approach to be correct, and, therefore, we call this stage 'the scientific stage.'

These three stages suggested by Auguste Comte could be possibly correct when viewed from the angle of the common people and the masses, in the sense that at one time the common people considered the cause of an event, such as a disease, to be some invisible being such as a demon or a jinn, and there are such persons and groups even today among educated Europeans. At a later stage they were able to recognize the order present in Nature and henceforth they attributed the cause of illness to the causes surrounding the sick person, believing that natural factors were responsible for it. Also, all those who have not studied medicine and have no medical knowledge but believe in the general order of nature have a similar kind of understanding.

During another stage the relationships between the various phenomena was discovered by the means of scientific experiments. This was not a new thing in itself and existed in the ancient period as well, although the eagerness to study natural phenomena and their causal relations is greater in the modern era.

However, this manner of classification of human thought is incorrect, because if we were to divide human thought into stages, our criterion should be the ideas of thinkers and not the thinking of the masses and common people. In other words, we should take into consideration the world view of outstanding individuals. Here it is that we find the classification of August Comte to be wrong through and through. Human thought, whose real representatives are the thinkers of every age, has certainly not passed

One of the eras or stages of thought is the stage of Islamic thought. From the standpoint of the Islamic method, all these ways of thinking can possibly be present simultaneously in a certain form of thought. That is, in the form of thought which we call 'Islamic,' all these three kinds of thought are capable of coexisting. In other words, a single person can at the same time have a mode of thought which is theological, philosophical, and scientific. From the point of view of a thinker cognizant with Islamic thought, the question does not arise as to whether the cause of an event is that which science tells us, or that which philosophy explains in the form of a force, or that which is named God. Hence, those like Auguste Comte need to be reminded that there exists a fourth mode of thought in the world of which they are unaware.

The Violence of the Church:

To this point we have pointed out the role of the Church in the process of inclination towards materialism from the point of view of the inadequacy of its theological concepts. Yet in another way, which was more effective than the inadequacy of its theological ideas, the Church has played an important part in driving people towards adopting an anti-God stance. This was its coercive policy of imposing its peculiar religious and scientific doctrines and views and depriving the people from every kind of freedom of belief in both these areas.

The Church, apart from its peculiar religious beliefs, had incorporated a set of scientific doctrines concerning the universe and man, which had mostly their philosophical roots in Greece and elsewhere and had gradually been adapted by major Christian scholars into its religious dogma. It not only considered any dissent in regard to the 'official sciences' impermissible, but also vehemently persecuted those who disagreed with these dogmas.

Presently, we are not concerned with the issue of freedom of religion and religious belief and that religious beliefs should inevitably be studied freely because otherwise that would go against the very spirit of religion, which is to guide to the truth. Islam supports the thesis that belief in religious doctrines ought to be based on research and not on conformity or compulsion, in contrast to Christianity which has declared religious dogma a prohibited zone for reason.

There were two other aspects in which the Church committed a major mistake. Firstly, it placed certain scientific notions inherited from the earlier philosophers and Christian theologians in the rank of its religious tenets, considering opposition to them to be heresy. Secondly, it did not stop at exposing the heretics and excommunicating those whose heresy had been proven and confirmed, but instead, like a violent police regime, it investigated the beliefs and convictions of persons by employing various tactics and tried to detect the faintest signs of dissent to religious beliefs in individuals and groups and persecuted them in an indescribably ruthless manner. As a result, scholars and scientists did not dare entertain any ideas opposed to what the Church considered as science; that is, they were constrained to think in accordance with the Church's thinking. This intense repression of ideas which was a

common thing from the 12th to the 19th century in countries like France, England, Germany, Holland, Portugal, Poland and Spain, naturally resulted in the development of a general extremely negative reaction towards religion. The tribunals held by the Church and known as the Inquisition were initiated with an objective reflected in the very name given them. Will Durant says:

> The Inquisition had a special procedure of inquiry and prosecution. Before the inquisition held its tribunal in a city, the summons of faith were communicated from the church pulpits. The people were asked to inform the inquisitors of any heretics or pagans that they knew of. They were encouraged to denounce and accuse their neighbours, friends and relatives. The informers were promised total secrecy. Anyone who knew a heretic and would not denounce him or hid him in his house faced denunciation and excommunication ... The methods of torture varied from time to time and from one place to another. Sometimes the accused was left to hang with his hands tied behind his back. Or he would be bound in say a way that he could not move, then water was poured into his throat so as to suffocate him. Or his arms and fists were so tightly bound with ropes that they cut into his flesh and reached the bones. [7]

He also says

> The number of victims between the years 1480-1488, that is in eight years, exceeded 8800 burnt on stakes, and 96,494 condemned to severe punishments According to estimates, from the year 1480 to 1808 more than 31,912 were condemned to death by fire and 291,450 were condemned to severe penalties. [8]

George Sarton, the distinguished scholar and famous authority on history of science in his book Six Wings: Men of Science in the Renaissance, has a discussion under the caption 'witchcraft,' where he relates the crimes committed by the Church in the name of campaign against witchcraft:

> Divines and religious scholars, consciously or otherwise, considered apostasy to be the same as witchcraft. Men quickly conclude that those who disagree with them are bad people. Magicians were men and women who had sold their souls to the Devil. On the assumption that heretics and irreligious persons also communed with the Devil, their persecution and torture were readily permitted and those who were orthodox in their faith could say to themselves: These trouble-making and disruptive people are magicians and they should be dealt with in this way, because they are neither capable of a straight faith nor eligible for pardon.

George Sarton refers to the book Hammer of the Magicians, which was written by two Dominican priests on the instructions of Pope Innocent VIII (r. 1484-1492) and which was, in fact, a practical manual on how to conduct the Inquisition of those accused of heresy and

witchcraft. He says:

> The book Hammer is a practical handbook for the Inquisitors and in it are found the details of the methods of detection, prosecution and punishment of magicians.... The fear of the magician was the real cause for killing them and these killings themselves became the reason for a heightened fear. In that period, a psychic epidemic had developed the like of which has not been seen until the present age of enlightenment. The proceedings of some trials of the Inquisition recorded in precise detail have survived. The Inquisitors were not bad people. They imagined themselves to be better at least than the ordinary people, because was it not that they were ceaselessly striving to uphold the word of truth and the name of God?! Nicolarmy, the inquisitor of Lourn was the cause of 900 magicians being burnt to death during a period of fifteen years (1575-1590). He was a conscientious man, and during the last years of his life he had a sense of guilt for having overlooked to kill some children. Has anyone the right to desist from killing the young of a viper? Bishop Tersepeter Binzfold issued verdicts for the death sentence of 6500 people.

He goes on to observe:

> When the Inquisitors arrived in a new region, they used to announce that anyone suspecting someone of being a magician should provide information about it. Anyone concealing information was liable to exile and fine.
>
> Providing information in this regard was considered a duty, and the names of those who provided information were not disclosed. The accused-among whom were possibly persons whose enemies had slandered them-were not informed of the crime they were accused of and were kept in the dark concerning the evidence of their culpability. It was assumed that these people were sinners and criminals, and the burden of proof lay upon them to prove their innocence. The judges adopted all kinds of mental and physical means for exacting a confession of sin and identifying collaborators. For encouraging the accused to confess, they were promised pardon or extenuation. But the judges imagined that honouring a promise given to magicians and heretics involved no moral obligation and the promise was kept for the short time which the accused took to say what had to be said. Every act falling outside the limits of honourable behaviour was committed against the accused and was justified as it was done for a holy cause. The more they tormented and tortured the people, the more they thought it necessary. What we have said can be easily confirmed by referring to the Hammer and other books and can also be pictured more vividly by studying the proceedings of the trials, of which there are plenty. [9]

After discussing this issue for three or four pages, George Sarton observes:

> Belief in magic was truly a mental illness more dangerous than syphilis, and was the cause of the terrible death of thousands of innocent men and women. Apart from that, an attention to this matter reveals the dark side of the Renaissance, less appealing than other things which are usually said about this period, but knowing which is necessary for a correct understanding of the events of this age. Renaissance was the golden age of art and literature, but at the same time it was also a period of religious intolerance and cruelty. The inhuman character of this period is such that, excepting the present age, it has no parallel in history. [10]

Religion, which should have been a guide and a harbinger of love, acquired this kind of countenance in Europe. The very notion of religion and God came to be associated in everyone's mind with violence, repression, and tyranny. Obviously, the reaction of the people against such an approach could hardly be anything except the rejection of religion and the negation of that which constitutes its very basis, God. The severest blow is struck on religion and to the advantage of materialism whenever religious leaders, whom the people consider as the real representatives of religion, put on a leopard's skin and wear a tiger's teeth and resort to excommunication and accusations of heresy, especially when private motives take this form.

Notes:

[1] That which appears here is a translation of 'Ilal e gerayesh beh maddigari, 8th edition (Qum: Intesharat e Sadra, 1375 H. Sh.) There is a long introduction, dated rajab 1, 1398 H by the author written for the 8th edition of the book titled 'Materialism in Iran', this will appear at the end of the serial.

[2] ... they follow only surmise, merely conjecturing. (6:116)

[3] Irving William Knobloch, The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe, cf. Russell, Mysticism and Logic (Penguin Books 1953), "A Free Mans Worship"

[4] See Russell, Mysticism and Worship, (Penguin Books 1953), "A Free Mans Worship", pp.50-59

[5] As the original source of Einsteins statement quoted by the author was not accessible to the translator, a parallel statement of his has been cited here from Ideas and Opinions by Albert Einstein (Calcutta: Rup & Co, 1984, first published by Bonanza Books, New York), based on Mein Weltbild, edited by Carl Seerling, trans and revised by Sonja Bargmann, pp. 40 (Tr.)

[6] Irving William Knobloch, op. Cit, the article by Walter Oscar Lundberg

[7] Will Durrant, The Story of Civilization, Persian transl. Tarikhe Tamaddun, v18 p350

[8] Ibid., p360

[9] George Sarton, Six Wings: Men of Science in the Renaissance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), Persian transl. Shish Bal, pp296-8

[10] Ibid, p303

INDEX

The Causes Responsible for Materialist

tendencies in the West II of IV

Translated from the Persian by Mujahid Husayn

Martyr Murtadha Mutahhari

(Vol XII and XIII)

The Inadequacy of Philosophical Ideas:

The second reason of importance in the large-scale inclination towards materialism in the West lies in the inadequacy of its philosophical ideas. In fact, that which is called 'divine philosophy' (hikmat-e ilahi) is in a very backward state in the West, though perhaps some people may not concede that the West has not reached the level of the divine philosophy of the East, especially Islamic philosophy.

Many philosophical ideas which raise a hue and cry in Europe are among the elementary issues of Islamic philosophy. In translations of Western philosophical works we come across certain ridiculous observations cited from major European philosophers. We also find some statements which show that these philosophers were confronted with certain insuperable difficulties while dealing with theological issues. That is, their philosophical criteria were not satisfactory. It is obvious that these inadequacies created an intellectual climate conducive to materialism.

The Problem of the First Cause:

One of the things that may appropriately be mentioned for the sake of example is the story of the 'First Cause' in Western philosophy. Although it is somewhat a difficult issue, we hope that our readers will show some patience.

Hegel is one of the great and famous philosophers of the world whose greatness is certainly undeniable. There is much that is true in his works. We will first quote a statement of this great philosopher concerning one of the most important issues of metaphysics and then compare it with what Islamic philosophy has to say in this regard. This statement is about the

'First Cause,' i.e. about the Necessary Being, from the standpoint of Its being the first cause of existents. Hegel observes:

> In solving the puzzle of the world of creation we should not go after the efficient cause ('illat-e fa'ili), because, on the one hand, the mind is not satisfied with infinite regress (tasalsul) and continues to look for the first cause. On the other hand, when we consider the first cause, the puzzle is not solved and the mind is not satisfied; the problem remains as to why the first cause became the first cause.

For solving the puzzle, we should find the end or the purpose and reason for being, because if we know for what it has come into existence, or in other words, when it is known that it is something rational, our nature is satisfied and does not seek another cause. It is obvious that everything requires a justification by reason while reason itself does not require any justification.

The commentators of his works have been unable to explain his intent, but perhaps a close examination might reveal what troubled this man.

If we wish to express this matter in our own philosophical idiom, in a manner that would accord with Hegel's viewpoint, or at least would come near it, we might say, [the conception of] God should be accepted in a form which is directly acceptable to the mind and not as something which the mind is constrained to accept under some compulsion. There is a difference between a notion whose teleology (limmiyat) the mind directly apprehends-and this apprehension is a natural one-and a notion which is only accepted because there is a proof which negates its contradictory and compels its acceptance. In fact, the basis of its acceptance is that one is left without an answer to the proof negating its contradictory. On the other hand, when the contradictory of a particular proposition is negated and proved to be false, naturally and necessarily that proposition has to be accepted because it is not possible for both contradictories to be false and one of them has to be necessarily accepted, considering that the falsity of one of the two contradictories is proof of the correctness of the other.

Accepting a notion due to the falsity of its contradictory compels and constrains the mind, without really convincing it, and there is a difference between compelling and constraining the mind and convincing and satisfying it. Often one is silenced by a proof while in the depth of one's consciousness there lingers a kind of doubt and hesitation with respect to the matter proved.

This difference is observable between 'a direct proof' and reductio ad absurdum (burhan-e khulf). At times, the mind travels naturally and consciously from the premise and the middle term to the conclusion. The conclusion is the direct product of the middle term, as in a deductive argument (burhan-e-limmi). In this type of proofs the mind spontaneously deduces the conclusion from the premises, and the conclusion, to the mind, is like a child born

naturally from its parents. But in reductio ad absurdum-or even in burhan-e inni for that matter-this is not the case. In reductio ad absurdum, the mind accepts the conclusion as a compulsion. The state of the mind here is similar to that of a person encountering a coercive force before which he is helpless. He accepts it because he cannot reject it.

In these types of proofs, as one of the two possibilities is invalidated by proof, the mind is forced into accepting the other. The other alternative that is accepted by the mind is accepted only because its contradictory has been rejected, and one from among a pair of contradictories has to be necessarily accepted, for it is impossible for both contradictories to be false. Hence it accepts the other possibility under constraint and compulsion. This acceptance of one side is due to compulsion and not spontaneous.

Hegel wants to say that our going after the first cause and our acceptance of it belongs to the latter category. The mind does not directly apprehend the first cause, but accepts it to avoid infinite regress. On the other hand, it sees that although it cannot refrain from accepting the impossibility of infinite regress, it also cannot understand the difference between the first cause and the other causes that makes these causes require a cause while the first cause can do without it. In his own words, one cannot understand why the first cause became the first cause. But if we seek the teleology and end [of being] we arrive at an end and purpose whose being an end is essential to it and does not require any other end and purpose.

Statements similar to Hegel's with respect to the first cause have been made by Kant and Spencer as well. Spencer says, "The problem is that, on the one hand, human reason seeks a cause for every thing; on the other, it rejects both the vicious circle and the infinite regress. Neither does it find an uncaused cause nor is capable of understanding such a thing. Thus when a priest tells a child that God created the world, the child responds by asking, 'Who created God?' "

Similar, or even more baseless, are Jean-Paul Sartre's remarks in this regard. He, as quoted by Paul Foulquie, says -concerning the first cause: It is self-contradictory that a being be the cause of its own existence. [1]

Paul Foulquie, while explaining Sartre's statement, says, "The above argument which Sartre has not elaborated is usually presented in this manner: If we contend that we have originated our own existence, we have to believe that we existed before our existence. This is the obvious contradiction which unravels itself. [2]

Let us now look at the true picture of the theory of the first cause from the philosophical point of view. Is it as what Sartre and others say-a thing bringing itself into existence and laying the foundations of its own being, so as to imply that a thing is its own cause and its own effect?

Or is the meaning of the first cause what Kant, Hegel and Spencer have imagined, i.e. a being

whose case involves an exception to the law of causation? That is, although every thing requires a cause and it is impossible for it to be without a cause, the first cause, an exception, is not such?

And is it the case that the impossibility of infinite regress, which makes us accept the first cause, actually compels us to accept a thing's being its own cause? Is it the case that our mind, in the process of avoiding one impossible, is forced into accepting another? Why? If the basis is that the mind should not accept what is impossible, then it should not accept any impossible whatsoever. Why should there be any exception?!

In accordance with the picture presented by Sartre, the first cause, like all other things, is in need of a cause, except that it itself fulfils its own need. According to the conception of Kant, Hegel and Spencer, we are compelled for the sake of avoiding infinite regress to allow an exception among things which are logically similar, and say that all things require a cause except one, the first cause. As to the difference between the first cause and other causes that makes all other existents depend upon a cause while this one is an exception, the answer is that there is no logical difference. It is only for the sake of avoiding the impossibility of infinite regress that we are forced to assume one of them as not being in need of a cause.

In this interpretation, the first cause is not assumed to require a cause and to meet its own need (as in Sartre's interpretation); rather, it is assumed that the first cause does not require a cause to bring it into existence. That is, the first cause is an exception to the law of causality. But as to why it does not require a cause, and why is it an exception, this interpretation gives no answer.

The first interpretation is very childish. No philosopher, or even an half-philosopher or laymen, would conceive God in this manner. Therefore, we will discuss briefly only the second interpretation and present the correct picture while doing so.

In our view, the doubt of the likes of Kant, Hegel and Spencer concerning the first cause derives from two basic philosophical issues, both of which have remained unsolved in Western philosophy. Of these, the first is the issue of fundamentality of existence (asalat al-wujud), and the second that of the criterion for requiring a cause (manat-e ihtiyaj bi 'illat). It is not appropriate here to discuss and explain the issue of fundamentality of existence, or the contrary doctrine of the fundamentality of essence (asalat al-mahiyyah).

However, we shall confine ourselves to giving a brief explanation. On the basis of the notion of fundamentality of essence-to give a very elementary and superficial picture of it, that is, one based on the assumption that God also, like all other existents, has an essence and an existence (which is an invalid idea even from the viewpoint of the proponents of the theory of fundamentality of essence, because they too consider God as pure existence)-the question arises as to why everything requires a cause while God doesn't. Why is one being Necessary

and others contingent? Is it not that all beings are essences which come into existence?

But on the basis of the theory fundamentality of existence-whose principal architect in regard to its philosophical demonstration and providing the proofs is Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi-the pattern of thinking changes radically.

On the basis of the former theory (fundamentality of essence) our conception of things will be that their essence is something which is intrinsically different from existence. Existence should be given to it by another being. We name this other being 'cause.' But in accordance with the theory of fundamentality of existence, the real being of things is what they partake of existence. Existence is not an essence to which another being may bestow existence. Hence if it be necessary that an external cause bestow something, that thing would be the very being of things, which happens to be existence itself, not something accidental and additional to the essence of things.

There is another question which arises at this point. Is it necessary that existence as such-that is, regardless of its form, manifestation and plane-requires to be bestowed by another being, implying that existence qua existence is identical with being a gift and emanation [of something else with dependence, relation, being an effect, and being posterior [to that which gives it existence], and hence is necessarily finite? Or is there some other perspective?

The answer is that the reality of existence, despite its various planes and manifestations, is no more than a single reality. It does not necessarily entail need and dependence upon another thing. That is because the meaning of dependence and need with respect to existence (in contrast to the dependence and need which were assumed earlier in relation to essences) is that existence should itself be needy and dependent. And if the reality of existence were need and dependence, it implies that it will be related to and dependent upon something other than itself, while no 'other' is conceivable for existence, because something other than existence is either non-existence or essence, which, as presumed, is derivative (i'tibari) and a sibling of non-existence. Hence the reality of existence qua reality of existence necessitates independence, self-sufficience, and absence of need for and relation with something other than itself. It is also necessarily absolute, unconditioned, and unlimited. That is, it entails the impossibility of non-existence and negation finding a way into it. Need, want, and dependence, and similarly finitude and mingling with non-existence, derive from another consideration, which is different from the consideration of pure existence: these derive from posteriority and being an effect (ma'luiyyat). That is, existence qua existence and regardless of all other considerations necessitates self-sufficience and independence from cause. As to the need for a cause-or in other words, that a being at a particular plane and stage should require a cause-that derives from its not being the reality of existence and its reliance upon God for coming into existence through emanation. And the logical consequence of being an emanation is posteriority and need, or rather, it is nothing except these.

From here we come to understand that according to the theory of fundamentality of existence, when we focus our intellect upon the reality of existence, we find there self-sufficience, priority, and the absence of need. In other words, the reality of existence is equivalent to essential necessity (wujub-e dhati), and to use an expression of Hegel's liking, the rational dimension of the reality of existence is absence of need for a cause. Dependence upon a cause derives from a consideration (itibar) other than the reality of existence, and this consideration is posteriority and finitude. In other words, the need for a cause is the same as existence at a plane posterior to the reality of existence, and, in Hegelian terminology, the need for a cause is not the rational dimension of existence.

This is the meaning of the statement that 'The Truthful, when they contemplate the reality of existence and observe it sans every condition and relation (idafah), the first thing which they discover is the Necessary Being and the First Cause. From the Necessary Being they infer Its effects which are not pure existence, being finite beings bearing non-being within.' This is what is meant when it is said that in this logic there is no middle term for proving the existence of God; the Divine Being is the witness of Its existence.

> God bears witness, and those possessing knowledge and upholding justice, and the angles, that there is no God but He. (3:18)

The proof of the sun is the sun (himself): if you require the proof, do

not avert thy face from him!

If the shadow gives an indication of him, the sun (himself) gives

spiritual life every moment.

This discloses the baselessness of the statements of those who say that the notion of the first cause involves a contradiction because it implies that a thing is the originator of its own existence and hence exists before coming into being.

Similarly baseless is the statement of those who say: 'Supposing that we prove that every thing has been brought into existence by the first cause, the question remains as to what has brought the first cause into existence; hence the first cause remains an unjustifiable exception.

Explaining the Universe by Means of Reason and not Cause:

Hegel believed that explanation of the universe on the basis of the first cause, irrespective of whether we consider it to be mind, matter, or God, is impossible because the concept of the first cause itself is inexplicable. Therefore, a different way should be found for an explanation

of the universe. First we should see what is meant by 'explanation,' he said.

> Now an isolated fact is usually said to be explained when its cause has been discovered. And if its cause cannot be ascertained, it is said to be an unexplained fact. But we cannot explain the universe in this way. If the universe could be said to have a cause, then either that cause is the effect of a prior cause, or it is not. Either the chain of causes extends back in an infinite series, or there is somewhere a 'first cause' which is not the effect of any prior cause. [f the series is infinite, then no final and ultimate explanation is to be found. If there is a first cause, then this first cause itself is an unexplained fact .... To explain the universe by something which is itself an ultimate mystery is surely no explanation. [3]

Later on Hegel observes that the concept of causality not only cannot provide an explanation of the universe but is also incapable of explaining particular things, because explaining involves the description of the logical relationship between a thing and something else. Whenever a thing is logically 'inferred' from something else it is said to have been explained.

For example, when we know that angle A is equal to angle B and that angle B is equal to angel C, we arrive at the logical conclusion that angles A and C are equal. The mind necessarily concludes that it has to be so and it cannot be otherwise, that it is logically impossible. Here the equality of angles A and C has been explained with the help of two premises. These two premises are the reason or ground for the equality of angles A and C, not its cause.

But causality does not explain a thing. Causality simply states an existential proposition (qadiyyah wujddiyyah) and not a necessary proposition (qadiyyah daruriyyah). This is because the concept of causality is arrived at by experience and not through logical inference. For example, we find by experimenting that water turns into steam due to heat and freezes due to cold. Consequently we say that heat is the cause of vaporization and cold the cause of freezing of water. But our mind does not make a judgment that it should be so necessarily and logically. Supposedly, if we arrived at the opposite conclusion by experiment, finding that water freezes due to heat and turns into steam on being exposed to cold, this would make no difference to the mind. Hence this assumption is not something logically impossible, whereas in contrast the assumption of inequality of angles A and C in the earlier example is a logical impossibility. Causality does not explain that an effect should be an effect logically, and that which is a cause should logically be a cause. Therefore, the universe should be explained through reason and not by resorting to causes. The difference between reason and cause is that a cause is something isolated; that is, it has an existence separate from that of its effect, whereas a reason is not isolated and separate existence from what it explains.

For example, the equality of angles A and B, and similarly of B and C, is the reason for the equality of angles A and C. But these reasons do not have an existence isolated and separate

from what they prove, as in the case of causes which have an existence independent of their effects.

Identity of Mind and Reality:

Hegel then discusses another principle, the principle of the identity of knowing and being, or the identity of mind and reality, or the mental realm and external reality. He is trying to remove the wall of dualism separating the mind from external reality. In Hegel's view, the mind and external reality are not two isolated realities alien to each other. That is, they are not two totally different entities opposing each other. They are identical because they are but two different aspects of a single reality. And the ground for this assertion is that the problem of how knowledge is possible appears to be insoluble if we do not accept it. [4]

Hegel launches his philosophical project on the basis of these two principles. The first is that reason and not cause can provide an explanation of the universe, and the other, the identity of knowing and being. He starts with being which he considers to be the first reason. From being he derives non-being, and from that he arrives at 'becoming' which is a concept denoting motion. In this manner he proceeds with his dialectic.

It is not possible for us to provide here a critique of Hegelian philosophy and to investigate the mainspring of his errors by applying the criteria of Islamic philosophy, which in itself would be a long and interesting account. Here it will suffice to point out that according to the theory of fundamentality of existence (asalat al-wujud) and with attention to the special 'Argument of the Truthful' (burhan-e Siddiqin), Hegel's imagined dichotomy between cause and reason, between the why and wherefore (limm-e thubiti and limm-e ithbati) vanishes. The first cause in this philosophy is both self-sufficient and without the need of a cause, as well as self-explanatory and requiring no ground. It is the cause as well as the ground of all things, as well as their explainer.

For solving the problem of epistemology, too, there is no need to resort to the identity of knowing and being as conceived by Hegel. The problem of knowledge, which is one of the most difficult and complicated issues of philosophy, has another solution. An elaborate discussion of these two issues has to wait for some other occasion.

We explained that according to the doctrine of fundamentality of existence the question as to why the first cause became the first cause becomes totally meaningless. Now we may observe that this question also does not arise on the basis of the doctrine of fundamentality of essence, because it arises only when we necessarily assume that the Necessary Being possesses an essence like all other existents which is additional to its existence.

But we are not compelled to make such an assumption. Rather we are compelled to assume the contrary; that is, after conceding the impossibility of an infinite regress we have no

alternative except accepting the existence of the first cause, the Necessary Being. Similarly, since the Necessary Being cannot be an entity composed of essence and existence, we make the assent that It is pure existence and sheer ipseity (inniyat-e sirf). Naturally there remains no room for our question.

The proof is also valid on the basis of the theory of fundamentality of essence (aalat al-mahiyyah). Philosophers like Ibn Sina have taken the same path. If there remains any question, it relates to another point, that if the reality of the Necessary Being is pure existence, what is the reality of other things? Is essence the reality of other things, existence being something derived (i'tibari) in relation to them, implying that the realm of being is a duality? Or is it that the reality of all things is what they partake of existence?

A correct answer to this question lies in opting for the second alternative, which is the theory of fundamentality of existence.

Certainly the likes of Ibn Sina did not reject the fundamentality of existence. At that time the issue of fundamentality of essence and that of existence had not been posed among philosophers or others. Therefore this question, in the context of Ibn Sina's exposition, is one which had not been raised during that time, and it does not amount to an objection against his exposition. In any case, the objection raised by those like Kant, Hegel and Spencer is not valid even aside from the fundamentality of existence. Now we shall provide an explanation about the criterion for an effect's need for a cause.

The Criterion for a Thing's Need for a Cause:

The law of causality and the cause-effect relationship between things form one of the most definite notions of human knowledge. The link and relation between the effect and its cause is not an apparent and superficial one; it is profound and permeates the very reality of the effect. That is, the effect, with all its being, is so dependent upon the cause that if the cause didn't exist, it would be impossible for the effect to come into being. All the sciences developed by man are founded upon this law. We have proved in its appropriate place that disregarding this law is tantamount to rejecting the presence of any order in the realm of being as well as negating every scientific, philosophical, logical and mathematical law. Here we do not consider it necessary to discuss this principle any further.

In this regard Islamic philosophers have posed an issue [5] which in a some respects precedes the principle of causality. This issue is: What is the criterion of the need for a cause? On this basis, in every case-for example concerning the causal relationship between A (the cause) and B (A's effect)-two questions come to the mind:

First, why did B come into existence? The answer to this question is that the existence of A required that B come into existence, and had A not existed, B too would not have come into

existence. Therefore, the existence of A is itself the answer to this question. Suppose a house is destroyed by flood and someone asks, 'Why was this house destroyed?' We reply that there was a flood.

The second question is, why does B need A and why cannot it come into existence without it? Why is not B independent of A? Obviously, the answer to this question is not that, 'That is because the existence of A required it.' We need to find another answer to this question.

The reply to the first question can be given on the basis of science, which is the product experimentation, because it is the function of science to discover causal relationships between things [6]. Hence if we are asked as to what is the cause of B, we reply by relying on science that the cause of B is A.

But as to why B needs A and why it is not independent of A or any other cause, the answer to this question lies outside the domain of science and it is not possible to answer it by experimentation, analysis, synthesis or by distilling or grinding in a laboratory. It is here that philosophical analysis and precise rational inference come in. That is because the question does not relate to any concrete phenomenon, because although the effect's need for a cause is an undeniable reality, it is not a phenomenon isolated from the cause and the effect; that is, we do not have three external phenomena, the cause, the effect and the effect's need for a cause. On the same basis, science, whose function is to study phenomena, is incapable of answering this question, while philosophy, which is capable of discovering these relationships and penetrating into the depth of realities, is the only discipline competent to answer such questions.

From the point of view of philosophy the matter is not that B needs A because B has never been observed empirically to come into existence without A, and therefore B requires A and that the same is true of every effect with respect to its cause. From the philosophical viewpoint it is impossible for an effect to be not an effect and to be independent of the cause. The effect's dependence on the cause is inseparable from the reality of the effect, or, rather, it is the very reality of the effect. This is the reason why philosophy poses the issue in a general manner without discussing the particular causal relationship between some B and A: What is the basis of causal dependence and where does the effect's need for a cause arise? Do things need a cause just because they are things and existents? Are thingness and existence the criteria of causal dependence, so that every thing and every existent should be dependent upon a cause just because of its being a thing and an existent? Or is it the case that mere thingness and existence are not the criteria of this dependence, because, if thingness and existence were the criteria of something they should in principle be the criteria of self-sufficience and independence, not the criteria of need and dependence. That which can appropriately serve as the criterion of neediness and dependence is some kind of deficiency in thingness and existence, not thingness and existence as such and ontic perfection.

Islamic philosophers, as well as the theologians (mutakallimun), who were the first ones to have started this debate, never considered thingness and existence per se as the criteria of neediness and dependence because that would imply that an existent needs a cause merely because it is existent. Rather, they were definite that there is another aspect of things deriving from their aspect of deficiency and nonbeing wherein lie the roots of this neediness and dependence. Altogether three theories have been advanced in this regard.

1. The Theory of the Mutakallimun:

The mutakallimun considered the criterion of neediness and dependence of effects upon causes and their lack of independence to be ,hududth, that is, their previous non-existence. They considered the absence of a thing's need for a cause to lie in its being eternal (qidam). They said that if the existence of a being was preceded by non-existence ('adam), or if, in other words, a thing did not exist at a time and came into existence at another time such an existent, on the basis that it was non-existent earlier and came into being later, needs a cause to bring it into existence, and its existence will depend upon something other than itself. But if there is a being which is eternal and there was never a time that it did not exist, such a being will be independent and without the need for a cause; it would not be dependent upon something else by any means. The mutakallimun held that the causal relationship between two things, for example, A in relation to B, is that A brings B into existence from a state of non-existence, and this is only possible where B's existence is preceded by non-existence. But if B is assumed to be eternal and there was never a time that it did not exist, then the causality of A with respect to it makes no sense.

In fact, the mutakallimun identified the [ontic] deficiency that is the basis of neediness and dependence of things upon something else to lie in previous non-existence, that is, in the temporal precedence of non-existence over existence. And they considered the source of perfection, self-sufficience and absence of dependence upon something else to be eternity or non- precedence by non-existence. Therefore, from the point of view of the mutakallimun, a being is either deficient, needy, preceded by non-existence (hadith) and dependent upon another, or it is perfect, self-sufficient, eternal and not dependent upon anything.

2. The Theory of Early Islamic Philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, down to the Era of Sadr al-Muta'allihin

These philosophers raised basic objections against the theory of the mutakallimun wherein huduth and previous non-existence were considered the criteria of ontic deficiency, need and dependence upon something else. However, this is not the place to mention their objections. They said that though it is true that everything which is hadith (preceded by non-existence) needs a cause, but the criterion for the hadith's need for a cause is not its huduth but something else. They also said that eternity is in no way the criterion of self-sufficience, perfection and absence of dependence. The philosophers claimed that the criterion of ontic

deficiency and perfection, and of need and self-sufficience, should be sought in the essence and quiddity (mahiyyah) of beings, not in previous non-existence, huduth, or eternal existence, qidam.

Things in their essence (dhat), from the point of view of being, are of two kinds-or at least can be assumed to be of two kinds. The first is the case where their being is their actual essence, that is, they do not have any essence (mahiyyah) apart from their existence. In other words their essence and their existence are one and the same. The second case is where the essence of a thing is something distinct from its existence and nonexistence. We call the first kind necessary being (wajib al-wujud), and the second, contingent being (mumkin al-wujud). The Necessary Being, from the standpoint of being existence itself-it being senseless for a thing to be devoid of itself, and impossible for it not to exist while being existence itself-is not in need of a cause, because causality implies that the cause brings the being of the effect into existence, and when the essence (dhat) of a thing is actual existence and there is no vacuum in it in this regard, the need for a cause does not exist. But a contingent being, from the viewpoint that it is neither existent nor non-existent in itself, being equally indifferent with respect to both the sides and having a vacuum in relation to both of them, needs something else to fill this vacuum, and that something is the cause. The existence of the cause fills that vacuum with existence, and that which is contingent-existent-in-itself (mumkin al-wujud bi al-dhat) becomes necessarily-existence-through-another (wajib al-wujdd bi al-ghayr). The nonexistence of a cause fills that vacuum with non-existence and a contingent-existent-in-itself becomes impossible due to the absence of its cause (mumtani' al-wu jad bi al-ghayr).

The philosophers call this [ontic] vacuum "essential contingency" (imkan dhati) and consider it to be the criterion for requiring a cause. Similarly, they name [ontic] plenitude "essential necessity" (wujub dhati).

In fact, from the point of view of philosophers, the essential deficiency which makes existents needy, deficient, and dependent upon something else is that essential vacuity (khala' dhati), and the essential perfection (kamal dhati) which is the source of perfection of an existent and makes it needless with respect to dependence upon another is that 'essential plenitude' (mala' dhati), that is the identity of essence (dhat) and existence.

As these philosophers consider the root and criterion of dependence to be essential vacuity and not previous non-existence, if there were to exists a being in the world which is eternal, there being no time that it did not exist and without ever being preceded by non-existence, it would still be a contingent existent (mumkin al-wujud), that is, its essence is not identical with its existence and it has a vacuity of existence at the plane of its essence.Such a being is an effect, a creature, and dependent upon another despite being eternal and everlasting. The philosophers believe that such existents do exist and they name them 'uql-e qahirah (the Supreme Intellects).

3. The Special Theory of Sadr al-Muta'allihin and His Followers:

Sadr al-Muta'allihin conceded that every hadith existent depends upon something else. He also accepted that every contingent being is in need of a cause. He considered valid the objections raised by the philosophers against the theologians, and agreed with the philosophers that there is nothing to prevent an existent from being temporally eternal, existing since preeternity and everlasting, while being dependent, a creature and an effect. Similarly he endorsed the view of the philosophers that the criterion of neediness and dependence should be sought within things themselves and not in their previous non-existence. However, he proved that in the same way that huduth cannot be the criterion of neediness, so also essential contingency (imkan dhati), or in our words 'essential vacuity,' too, cannot be the criterion of dependence and neediness because essential contingency is an attribute of essence, and it is essence which is said to be essentially indifferent to being and non-being and something hollow and empty, requiring something else to fill it. But considering that essence is derivative (istibari) and not fundamental, it lies outside the realm of neediness and self-sufficience causing and being caused, efficiency and receptivity. Rather essence lies outside the domain of existence and non-existence. Essential contingency (imkan mahuwi) cannot be the principal basis of this neediness. All these characteristics such as existence and non-existence, causing and being caused, neediness and self-sufficience, can be attributed to essence, but only accidentally (bi al-'arad), metaphorically, and secondarily, that is following existence, from which essence is derived and abstracted. Therefore, the real basis of intrinsic neediness and intrinsic self-sufficience should be sought in existence itself. In the same way that Sadr al Muta'allihin proved the fundamentality of existence (asalat al-wujud), he also proved the gradation of existence, that is the hierarchy of different planes of existence. Accordingly, in the same way as self-sufficience does not lie outside the reality of existence, similarly neediness too is not external to the reality of existence, and in the same way as perfection is not something extraneous to the reality of existence but is identical with it, so also deficiency is not external to it. It is the reality of existence which receives perfection and deficiency, plenitude and poverty, self-sufficience and neediness, intensity and weakness, necessity and contingency, infinitude and finitude or is rather identical with them. The reality of existence in its purity and at the plane of its own essence is equivalent to perfection, self-sufficience, independence, intensity, necessity and infinitude, while deficiency, need, dependence, contingency, and the like are posterior to the plane of the essence and derive from being an effect (ma'luliyyat) with its implied deficiency.

From Sadr al-Muta'allihin's point of view, the notion of essential vacuity of essence in respect of existence and the need for something else to fill this vacuum is correct only on the basis of fundamentality of essence, not on the basis of fundamentality of existence. On the basis of fundamentality of existence, attributing need and essential vacuity to essence and the notion that something else called 'cause' is required to fill this vacuum, are only correct as a loose philosophical metaphor. Causing ('illiyyat) and being caused (ma'luliyyat), as well as self-sufficience and need, all pertain to something which is concrete and real, and that is existence. The roots of an existent's dependence on another existent lie in its essential deficiency and its

essential finitude.

In contrast to the opinion of the theologians and the vast majority of philosophers, according to Sadr al-Muta'allihin's view, need, the needy, and the criterion of neediness are not different things; need, the needy, and the criterion of neediness, all the three are a single thing. Certain planes of existence are identical with actual need with respect to another plane by virtue of their essential deficiency and essential posteriority (ta'akhkhur dhati) to the principal source of existence, .

Sadr al-Muta'allihin also follows the classical approach of such philosophers as Ibn Sina while discussing the issue of criterion for the need of a cause, but elsewhere he expresses his own opinion on this issue, which is a definite and inevitable result of the principles he has propounded. As he has dealt with the issue in the classical manner by adopting the approach of his predecessors, later scholars and the followers of his school, like the late Hajji Sabzawari, have imagined that Sadr al-Muta'allihin does not have a distinct opinion of his own on this issue. We have for the first time highlighted this fact in the footnotes of Usul-e falsafeh wa rawish-e riyallsm ('The Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism') and have presented it for the benefit of others.

In any case, that which is definite in accordance with the views of all the schools is that the roots of dependence upon a cause do not lie simply in being a thing or being an existent. Things, just because they have existence, do not require a cause. Existence, more than being indicative of dependence, is indicative of self-sufficience.

From what we have said two facts come to light: **1.** That which is often said that 'Every thing, or every existent, requires a cause,' is not only incorrect but also a grave error. The correct thing to say is that 'Every deficient being is in need of a cause.' As we have seen, the different schools which have discussed this topic differ in their determination of the deficiency which makes the criterion for dependence on a cause, but they concur that every deficient thing requires a cause, not every thing whether it is deficient or perfect. **2.** Our conception of the First Cause has now become clear. It became evident that the First Cause, which is the same as the eternal, perfect, infinite Essence (dhat) of the Necessary Being, is the first cause because existence itself is Its essence, and existence in itself is perfect, not deficient, and limitless, not limited, thus ruling out any dependence upon a cause. The meaning of the First Cause is neither that it is its own cause-in the sense that it lays the foundation of its own existence and brings itself into being-nor that the First Cause does not differ from all other existents with regard to the need for a cause and that it is an exception to the law of causality.

Here it is possible that a doubt may arise in the minds of those who are not trained in these issues, that although it is correct that the First Cause, because of its being eternal, perfect, infinite and necessarily existent, is free from all forms of dependence, while all other things on account of their not possessing these qualities are dependent and in need, but why did the

First Cause become the first cause? That is, why did only the First Cause, from among all existents, become eternal (qadim), perfect, infinite and necessarily existent? Why didn't It become hadith and deficient? Why didn't another existent, which is presently deficient and dependent, not take the place of the Necessary Being?

In view of the explanation provided, the answer to this question is obvious. It has been presumed in this question that it was possible for the Necessary Being not be a necessary being and that it was through the interference of a cause that It became a necessary and not a contingent being. It has also been assumed that it is possible for a contingent being not to be a contingent being, and that it became such due to the intervention of some cause. In other words, it was possible for an essentially perfect and infinite being to be deficient and finite, and for a deficient and finite being to be essentially perfect and infinite, and it was due to the intervention of some factor that one became essentially perfect and infinite while the other became essentially deficient and finite. Yes, this is the basis of the question.

The questioner is oblivious of the fact that the plane of existence of each existent is the essence (dhat) of that existent, in just the same manner as the plane of each number is the actual essence of that number. Therefore, if an existent becomes independent of a cause as a result of essential self- sufficience and essential perfection, the consequence is that no cause can interfere with it in any manner, no cause has brought it into existence, and no cause has placed it at the plane at which it subsists. The question as to why the First Cause became the first cause-which is considered unanswerable in Western philosophy-is actually a meaningless question. For the First Cause, Its existence is Its reality and Its very essence (dhat), and being the First Cause is also identical with Its essence, and in both capacities it has no need of a cause.

This question is just like saying, 'Why is the number one, one? Why didn't it not become two? Why did two become number two and not one, and why it didn't take the place of one?' Since we have discussed the matter that the plane of existence of each existent is actually the very essence of that existent in greater detail in our book 'Adl-e Ilahi ('Divine Justice'), we shall refrain from repeating it here.

As a conclusion to this part of the discussion it would be appropriate to cite the remarks of Bertrand Russell, a contemporary philosopher, about the First Cause for ascertaining the character of his philosophical views concerning this profound issue.

Russell has a small book by the name Why I am not a Christian. In it he does not simply limit his criticism to Christianity, but rather criticizes religious ideas in general, and the idea of God in particular, which is accepted even by some non-religious persons.

Among the things he objects to in that book is 'the First Cause argument.' In order to know how Mr. Russell, this great Western philosopher whose fame has spread everywhere, has

conceived these issues in his mind we shall quote him here. He says:

> It is maintained that everything we see in this world has a cause, and as you go back in the chain of causes further and further you must come to a First Cause, and to that First Cause you give the name of God.

Then Russell goes on to refute the argument in these words:

> I may say that when I was a young man and was debating these questions very seriously in my mind, I for a long time accepted the argument of the First Cause, until one day, at the age of eighteen, I read John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, and I there found this sentence: 'My father taught me that the question, "Who made me?" cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question, "Who made God?" ' That very simple sentence showed me, as I still think, the fallacy in the argument of the First Cause. If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument.

Our previous observations highlight the fallacy in Russell's argument. The argument is not about whether everything must have a cause or if it is possible for a being to exist without a cause as an exception, that if it is possible for one thing to exist without a cause, what difference would it make whether it is God or the universe.

The issue involved is that [the thingness of] every thing and [the existence of] all that exists is neither the criterion of dependence upon a cause nor that of non-dependence in respect of its being something and having some kind of existence, so that the question may arise as to what difference is there among these things in this respect. The issue at hand is that among things and existents there exists an entity and a being which is pure existence and absolute perfection, and every perfection derives from it and is directed towards it, and it, being identical with existence, is in no need of a cause-as against things which have a borrowed existence-and such a being neither lacks existence nor any of its perfections for it to either seek them, or hasten to acquire them, nor does it lose them.

On the other hand, we live in a world in which everything has a transient nature and is in search of something which it lacks, and everything at another time loses what it presently possesses. We live in a world in which everything is subject to decline, annihilation, change and transformation, and all the signs of poverty, need, dependence, indebtedness and having a borrowed existence are evident on the face of every thing. Therefore, such a world cannot be the First Cause and the Necessary Being. And this is the Abrahamic argument mentioned in the Noble Qur'an:

> So We were showing Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and earth, that he might be

> of those having sure faith. When night outspread over him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'I love not the setters.' When he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray.' When he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater!' But when it set he said, 'O my people, surely I am quit of that you associate. I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, a man of pure faith; I am not of the idolaters.' (6:75-79)

The summary of the argument is that, in consonance with primordial nature and self-evident judgement of the intellect, he considers himself a being that is servile and subject to and sustained [by something else], and dedicates himself to the search of his lord and sustainer. The star, the moon, and the sun-which are the most luminous existents and which the people of Abraham's time considered as power that regulated and ruled the world-by turns capture his attention, but after a moment's contemplation the signs of subjugation, subjection, and being sustained by something else become evident in them as well as other existents in the world of nature. Thereat Abraham sets everything aside and turns his heart towards the mighty power which is the absolute sustainer and absolutely supreme, and in which there is no sign of subjugation, subjection, huduth, annihilation, need and poverty. From the presence of need and annihilation, transience and decline,dependence and subjection, he discovers the existence of that subjugating power and perfection.

God and Evolution:

Among the various issues which in my opinion have had a great impact on materialistic tendencies is the false notion that there is a contradiction between the principle of creation on the one hand and the theory of evolution, especially the evolution of living organisms, on the other. In other words, the fallacy is that creation amounts to instantaneous coming into existence of things, while evolution means that things do not have a creator.

As history indicates, the idea existed, especially in the Western world, that the implication of the universe being created by God is that all things should be unvarying and fixed, and that there should be no change in the universe, especially in the principles of the universe, that is, the species. Hence evolution is impossible, especially where it relates to the essence and necessitates a change in the essence of a thing and a mutation of its species. On the other hand, we observe that with the development of the sciences the notion that things, especially living creatures, show an ascending evolutionary movement becomes ever more confirmed and established. The conclusion that is drawn from these two premises is that the sciences, especially biological sciences, are moving in an anti-theistic direction.

As we know, the views of Lamarck and Darwin, especially those of the latter, raised a storm in Europe. Although Darwin was himself a believer in God and religion, and as related, sat the time of his death he held the Bible pressed to his chest,' and repeatedly in his writings

declared his faith in God, his ideas were introduced as being totally anti-God.

Someone might say that evolutionism in general (especially Darwinism, in view of the hypothesis that the origin of man is from the ape, which was later abandoned) was considered anti-God because it went against the contents of the holy scriptures. In religious scriptures the creation of man has been usually traced back to a single human being named Adam, and this apparently implies that he was directly created from dust. Accordingly, it was both correct and proper that Darwin and the Darwinists, or rather all the proponents of evolution, be branded as anti-God, because in no way is it possible to reconcile faith in religion with belief in the theory of evolution. There is, therefore, no alternative to accepting one from among these two and rejecting the other.

The reply to this is that, firstly, what the sciences have opined in this regard are hypotheses which are either constantly changing, modified, or even abandoned and replaced by other hypotheses. On the basis of such hypotheses, it is neither possible to reject some idea stated explicitly and without any room for interpretation in a divine scripture, nor is it possible to consider such hypotheses a proof of the baselessness of religion as such and the baselessness of religion as a proof for the non-existence of God.

Secondly, scientific opinion has moved in a direction which shows that the basic changes occurring in living creatures, especially at stages where their species changes and their essence undergoes mutation, are in the form of a leap, swift and sudden. Therefore, the concept of very gradual, intangible and cumulative changes is no longer relevant. When science considers it possible for an infant to cover a distance of hundred years in a single night, what evidence is there that it cannot cover the distance of hundreds of million years in forty nights? Even if that which has been mentioned in religious texts be presumed to imply explicitly the creation of the first man directly from dust, it has been expressed in a manner that shows that it involved some kind of action and reaction in nature. It is stated in religious texts that Adam's clay was formed in forty days. Who knows, perhaps all the stages which the first living cell had to cover in the natural course in billions of years for it to eventually give rise to a human being, may have been covered in forty days by Adam's clay in extraordinary conditions which the hand of Divine power had brought about, in the same way as the human ovum, in a period of nine months in the womb, is said to cover all the stages the animal predecessors of man took billions of years to cover.

Thirdly, suppose that what the sciences say in this regard is more than a mere hypothesis and is a confirmed scientific fact, that it is not possible to create natural conditions so that matter may swiftly and speedily cover the stages which it covers slowly under a different set of conditions, and that it is a scientifically confirmed fact that man had animal ancestors. In the light of these assumptions, are the relevant religious texts such that they cannot be interpreted accordingly? If we specifically take the Noble Qur'an as the criterion, we find that the Qur'an has narrated the story of Adam in a symbolic manner. I do not mean to say that the Adam mentioned in the Qur'an is not a person's name but a symbol representing the human species. I

don't mean to say that. To be certain the first Man (Adam) was an individual and a person having concrete existence. What I mean is that the Qur'an has narrated the story of Adam in a symbolic way from the point of view of his stay in heaven, his seduction by Satan, greed, and jealousy, his expulsion from heaven, his penitence, and so on. The conclusion the Qur'an derives from this story is not from the standpoint of the wonderful creation of Adam and it does not play any role in drawing any theological conclusion. Rather, the Qur'an narrates the story of Adam solely from the point of view of man's spiritual station and from the viewpoint of certain ethical issues. It is fully possible for a person who believes in God and the Qur'an to retain his faith in God and the Qur'an while interpreting the story of Adam's creation in some manner. Today, we know religious persons who have faith in God, the Prophet (s) and the Qur'an, and who interpret the story of Adam's creation in a manner consonant with the modern sciences. No one has claimed that these views contradict with faith in the Qur'an. I myself, while studying these views in books on this subject, find in them many points worthy of attention and reflection, although I am not totally convinced about them.

However, to consider such issues a pretext for rejecting the Qur'an and religion is far from scientific justice, to say nothing of using them as an excuse for negating belief in God.

Fourthly, suppose we accept that the literal meanings of religious texts are not susceptible to an alternative interpretation and that man's descent from animals is scientifically definite. At the most it would mean that one will lose faith in religious scriptures. But why should one lose faith in God? Firstly, it is possible that new religions may emerge which do not subscribe to the idea of man's direct creation from dust as explicitly as the Torah. Secondly, does the rejection of a single, some, or all religions logically imply the rejection of belief in God? There have always been individuals who have had faith in God without adhering to any religion.

From all that we have said it is known that the assumed contradiction between the contents of religious texts and the theory of evolution cannot be considered a reason for inclining towards materialism; the reason must be something else. The fact is that the European materialists imagined the hypothesis of evolution to be rationally and logically incompatible with the issue of God, irrespective of its compatibility with religion. Accordingly, they proclaimed that belief in God is negated by acceptance of the theory of evolution.

Let us now examine this argument, to see whether there is any rational and logical contradiction between these two issues, or if the inadequacy of the concepts of European philosophy is responsible for an imagined contradiction. Whatever it may be, we need to examine the approach taken by the materialists in taking this contradiction for granted.

We can explain their statements in two ways. Firstly, in the sense that the theists are deprived of their most important argument with the emergence of the theory of evolution. A major argument of the theists for proving the existence of an omniscient and wise creator was the

presence of a perfect order of existents. This perfect order is more evident in the plant and animal kingdoms. If the creation of plants and animals had been instantaneous, the argument based on the perfect order of existents would have been correct, because it was not rationally acceptable that a being could come into existence instantaneously and all of a sudden without any intelligent plan, especially where it possesses such structures which show that its formation, design, and organism has been created with a planned purpose. But if the creation of the existents was gradual and extended in time, that is, if it has taken place in the course of hundreds of millions of years and the structure of existents has acquired the present form little by little with the passing of centuries and generations, there is no obstacle to regarding these intricate systems as entirely unplanned. That is, no intelligent power has supervised it and only coincidences and forced conformity with the environment have been the cause of these systems and organisms.

Therefore, with the acceptance and confirmation of mutation the main argument of the theists is taken away from them, and this by itself is sufficient to tilt the balance in favour of the materialists and make a group incline towards that side.

But this interpretation is in itself incorrect. If such views are presented before a vigorous theistic school of thought it will immediately reply that, firstly, it is a mistake to consider the perfection of design as the only argument for the existence of God, and to mention it as the main argument is indeed an exaggeration. Secondly, the whole order of creation is not limited to the structure of animal organs for it to be said that the gradual evolution of species is enough to explain their accidental existence. Thirdly, the important and also the principal reply to this criticism is that the gradual emergence of and accidental changes occurring in the structure of plants and animals are not at all sufficient for explaining the precise systems of their bodies.

Accidental changes can be considered sufficient only when we presume that there occurs a change in the body of a living creature as a result of an accident or an aimless act, or an act meant for some purpose other than the consequence produced; for instance, when a web is formed accidentally on a duck's feet and proves helpful in swimming and is transferred to later generations as a result of heredity.

But, firstly, from the viewpoint of heredity, the transfer of acquired and individual characteristics, especially acquired characteristics, is highly improbable or rather ruled out. Secondly, all organs and members of the body are not like the web of a duck's foot. Generally, every part is itself a part of an elaborate and complicated system, such as those relating to digestion, respiration, vision, hearing, and so on. Each of these systems is an organized and interlinked apparatus in which the related function and characteristic is not achieved unless all its parts come into existence. For example, the membranes of the eye are not such that each of them be assumed to perform a separate function of the body and as having come into existence gradually in millions of years. Rather the eye, along with all its membranes, fluids, nerves and muscles with their astonishing number, variety, organization

and formation performs a single function. It is not admissible that accidental changes, even in billions of years, would gradually give rise to the ocular or auricular system.

The theory of evolution more than anything points towards the role of an intelligent and guiding force in the being of living creatures and demonstrates the principle of teleology.

Darwin himself propounded the principle of adaptation to environment in such terms that he was told that he spoke of it as if it were a metaphysical principle. It is a reality that the capacity of living organisms to adapt to the environment, which is a very mysterious and astonishing power, is something metaphysical; that is, it is subject to a kind of guidance and consciousness of purpose, and is in no way a blind and aimless power.

The principle of evolution implies the presence of an unseen regulating power in the universe no less than any other theory. The reason that Darwin and many other later biologists are theists and religious persons is this that they have not considered the principles and laws of nature-such as the principles of struggle for survival, heredity, selection of the fittest, and adaptation to the environment (if interpreted solely as an ordinary blind natural reaction to the environment)-by any means sufficient for explaining the emergence of living organisms. Of course, we do not say that they did not consider them necessary and reverted to the theory of instantaneous creation of living organisms. All that we are saying is that they did not consider them sufficient.

Actually, the reason why the theory of evolution was considered contradictory to the famous theist argument for the existence of God based upon perfect design was doubtlessly the weakness of the systems of philosophy and metaphysics. Instead of utilizing the emergence of the theory of evolution to the advantage of the theist school, they considered it as antithetical to theist thought, because they imagined that only an instantaneously created universe needed a cause and creator, and if the universe or any species were to come into existence gradually, the gradual natural factors were sufficient to explain their existence. Such assumptions indicate the weakness of the Western systems of philosophic thought.

Apart from the assumption that the theory of evolution weakens the argument by design and perfection of creation, there existed another reason why the evolutionary school was considered antithetical to theism, thus assisting the spread of materialism. This was the supposition that if there were a God, things must have come into existence according to a prior plan; that is, the existence of things should have been anticipated in God's knowledge and then created by His irresistible will.

The presence of a prior plan implies the total absence of chance, because chance contradicts foreknowledge, being something unexpected and unpredictable. But we know that chance plays an extraordinary important and effective role in the creation of the universe. Even if we suppose that chance is not sufficient for the initial existence of things, we cannot deny its

existence and effective role in the process of creation For example, the earth, which is the cradle of living organisms, was a fragment which came into existence due to a chance, for instance, due to the sun's nearing a big spherical body and coming under its gravitational pull. Had there existed a prior plan, or a fate predetermined since eternity, chance would have no role. The conclusion is that if God exists things should come into existence in a manner preplanned and foreknown in His eternal knowledge, and had things been foreknown in God's eternal knowledge there would be no chance. And since chance has an effective role in creation, the creation of things was unpredictable, and since it was unpredictable, there is no God.

Apart from this, if things came into existence due to the eternal Divine will, it was necessary for them to do so instantaneously at one stroke, because God's will is absolute, irresistible and unconditional. The implication of God's absolute, irresistible and unconditional will is that everything He intends to create comes into existence without a moment's delay. Hence it is mentioned in religious texts that God's command is such that when He wills something He says, 'Be', and it comes into existence immediately. Therefore, if the world and things existing in it have come into existence by God's will, it follows that the world must come into existence from the very beginning in whatever form or state it would eventually assume.

The conclusion derived from these two points-one of which relates to God's eternal knowledge and the other to the Divine will-is that if God exists, there exist both an eternal Divine knowledge and an eternal will, and eternal knowledge and eternal will require that things come into existence

instantaneously.

The reply is that neither God's eternal knowledge nor His eternal will require that things come into existence instantaneously. Further, neither the theists the world over nor the religious texts have posed the issue in this manner.

It is mentioned in religious texts that God created the universe in six days. Regardless of whatever may be implied by 'six days,' be it six periods, or six days of God, each of which is equal to a thousand years, or six ordinary days amounting to 144 hours, that which is understood from this statement is gradualness. The theists have never said that the eternal knowledge of God and His absolute will necessitate that the heavens were created in a single moment and instantaneously. The scriptures say that they were created gradually during a certain period of time.

And the Noble Qur'an also states very explicitly the gradual development of the foetus in the womb and considers it as a pointer to the knowledge of God. Nobody has ever said that the necessary implication of God's eternal knowledge and will-which is such that when it relates to a certain thing and He says, 'Be,' the thing comes into being-is that the foetus develops

momentarily. This was from the viewpoint of the scriptures.

From the point of view of philosophy, the claim that God's eternal knowledge implies that chance does not play any effective role whatsoever, requires a bit of explanation.

From the philosophic viewpoint, fortuity and accident, or in other words chance, does not exist at all, and that which men calls chance is not chance in reality and does not essentially differ in the least from all other causes and effects, prerequisites and consequences.

The word 'chance' is used in two different senses. The first sense is where something comes into being without any efficient cause, that is, a thing that supposedly did not exist comes into existence without the interference of any factor. This kind of chance is rejected by all schools of thought irrespective of their being theists or materialists, because even the materialists do not accept such a hypothesis about the origin of the universe. This kind of chance is also not related to the topic of our present discussion, because even those who claim that organic changes in animals are due to chance factors do not imply this kind of chance.

The other sense in which this word is used is where a consequence follows from conditions which are not its prerequisite, or when conditions give rise to a consequence which does not follow from them. For example, if you get into a car in Tehran and drive on the Tehran-Qum highway you will reach Qum after two or three hours. You never say that I drove on this highway and accidentally reached Qum, because the natural outcome of this journey is your reaching Qum. Now suppose you have an old friend whom you have not seen for years. While travelling to Qum you are neither thinking about him nor looking around for him, but as soon as you reach 'Aliabad on the Tehran-Qum highway, you get off the car to relax for a while at an inn. Finding an empty chair at a table, all of a sudden you find your friend whom you had not seen for twenty years. You come to know that he was living in Shiraz and had come to Tehran, that he too had stopped there to relax for a while when he saw you. Here each of you will say, 'We met by chance on the Tehran-Qum highway.' The reason why both of you consider this meeting accidental is that in the general course of nature travelling between Tehran and Qum does not necessarily result in such a meeting. Were it necessary, it would mean that such a meeting should occur whenever you travel from Tehran to Qum whatever the circumstances, while it is not so. This event took place only during this particular journey which took place at a particular time under its particular circumstances. That is why this meeting was not foreseeable for you or your friend or anyone in your place, and neither you nor your friend would have been able to include this meeting in his plans while planning his journey. Things which can be foreseen and included in an itinerary are those which occur in the natural course of journey between Tehran and Qum.

But if you turn your attention from the general character of the journey from Tehran to Qum and focus your attention on this particular journey which was made at a particular time under particular conditions, and if you take it into consideration with its accompanying

circumstances and conditions and other accompanying events, you will find that your meeting your friend at that specific point and at that moment was not at all accidental; rather it was necessary, natural and inevitable consequence of your journey towards Qum, and was also totally predictable for someone who was aware of all the movements and circumstances of both of you.

This meeting is accidental in the eyes of someone who takes into view the general nature of the journey from Tehran to Qum. Obviously this journey has a set of general implications, and that which lies outside them, from the point of view of its general nature, will be considered chance. But that which exists is not just the general nature; that which exists is that general nature along with a set of condition, and the notion of chance vanishes on taking into consideration these conditions and additional facts .

Here we give another example to further elucidate how accident and chance are subjective in nature; that is, it is an accident or chance from the viewpoint of a person who is ignorant of the causes, whereas from the standpoint of one who has knowledge of the causes involved there is no chance or accident.

Imagine two persons employed in a certain institution and who receive their instructions from a single source. One of them, Mr. A, is employed in Khurasan and the other, Mr. B, works at Isfahan. Instructions are received from the headquarters ordering Mr. A to leave on a certain date for a disaster-stricken area to perform some specific task, and soon afterwards instructions are received by Mr. B ordering him to go on the same day to the same place for performing another task. Obviously Mr. A and Mr. B meet each other at that place and their meeting is accidental for each of them. Both of them will say that they met each other accidentally on a certain day and at a certain place. Each of them separately views the nature of his task and finds that this meeting was not a necessary consequence of his task and that it was not predictable for either of them. But from the viewpoint of the headquarters, which ordered both of these apparently separate and unrelated assignments that were carried out under its instructions, this meeting was not at all accidental. For the headquarters, which determined the courses of the two journeys from Isfahan and Mashad to that point and arranged both of them in such a manner that the two individuals reached that point on a specific date, their meeting and coming together was very natural and inevitable. The headquarters cannot say that it sent these two and they accidentally met each other at a certain place. Therefore, accident and chance are relative; it is an accident in relation to one who is unaware of the happenings, whereas for one who knows the details of events and has a complete knowledge of the circumstances and conditions there is no accident or chance involved. This is why they say: that which is called 'chance' is such only in relation to one who is ignorant of the causes, not for one who has complete knowledge of the events.

From this we come to know that for God, the Exalted, and in fact from the viewpoint of reality and what actually takes place, there is no question of accident or chance. Hence, to say that 'if we accept God we must also accept that the events in the universe occur in accordance

with a plan and are therefore predictable and involve no accident or chance, whereas the sciences believe in an effective and important role of chance and accident,' is something baseless.

The accidents are such with reference to us who are ignorant of the totality of causes, not with reference to God, who is the Creator and Originator of every thing and encompasses all causes, conditions, and circumstances.

Now something regarding [God's] eternal will.

This objection is weaker than the first one. Strangely enough, has been imagined that God's absolute and eternal will implies that all existents come into being instantaneously! What a big blunder! The implication of God's absolute will is that everything should come into existence in the manner He desires and in the form He intends without facing any opposition and obstacle, that there be no gap between His will and the thing willed, not that everything which He desires should come into existence in an instantaneous manner.

To explain, if we, who have a deficient and finite will, will something, we have to rely upon things other than our own will, and unless we obtain those means our will by itself can achieve nothing. Also we need to remove certain obstacles, because our will cannot be realized with their presence. But since God's will encompasses all things and everything is the result of His will, the means and hindrances too are the creation of His will. Thus at the plane where His will prevails there exists nothing by way of a precondition, means, or obstacle: all conditions, means, obstacles and their absence are subservient and subject to His will. Therefore, that which He wills exists in the manner willed by Him, without the least delay. If the existence of a thing depends upon the fulfillment of certain conditions, it is proper to say from the viewpoint of that thing that it depends on these conditions, but it is not correct to say about God's will that it depends upon certain conditions. That is, the execution of Divine will is not dependent upon anything; rather it is Divine will which ordains the thing with those conditions and it comes into existence in the manner willed by Him without any departure.

Thus the meaning of God's possessing an absolute will is that whatever He wills takes place in the manner He wills, without His will depending upon anything beyond Himself for its execution. Therefore, if He wills a thing's existence to be instantaneous that thing comes into being instantaneously. But if He wills that a thing's existence be gradual it comes into being gradually. It depends upon the mode of the thing's existence and the manner in which God has willed its existence.

If Divine will and wisdom so ordain that living creatures should come into existence gradually in a span of billions of years, they will naturally come into existence in this manner. Therefore, it is wrong to say that God's absolute will requires that everything come into existence instantaneously. The logical implication of the absolute Divine will is that

everything comes into existence in the manner decreed by Him, instantaneously or gradually, without depending upon anything beyond the Divine will.

Apart from this, the philosophers have proved that things having a gradual character have an existence that can only be gradual; it is impossible for them to have any other kind of existence, either static or instantaneous. Hence the receptivity (qabiliiyyah) of the receiver (qabil) also necessitates gradualness.

Sadr al-Muta'allihin has proved that there is a kind of motion in the world called 'substantial motion' (harkat jawhariyyah). According to the theory of substantial motion there is nothing static in nature nor can possibly be. All things existing in nature have a gradual existence and it cannot be otherwise. This philosopher, who is also a divine 'arif (gnostic), never thought that there might be people in the future who would imagine that the instantaneous creation of all things was implied by God's eternal knowledge or will.

A few years ago I wrote an article "Monotheism and Evolution" ("Tawhid wa Takamul") for the monthly Maktab-e Tashayy'u in which I have discussed the errors in the approach of Western philosophers in considering theism to be incompatible with the concept of evolution.

Notes:

[1] Paul Foulique, L'Existentialisme, Persian trans., p96

[2] Ibid.

[3] Walter Terrace Stace, The Philosophy of Hegel, Dover Publications, pp50-1

[4] Ibid., pp71-2

[5] This was a problem posed for the first time in Islamic Philosophy, and like many other problems it was the result of the criticisms of the mutakallimun. The criticisms of the mutakallimun led to the emergence of certain problems in philosophy, and in this sense philosophy is greatly indebted to them.

[6] These remarks invoke a loose kind of speech. Science is incapable of proving the casual relationship that is the effects needs for a cause. The most sciences can establish is an association or succession between phenomena. We have clarified this topic fully in the footnotes to the Usule falsafeh wa rawish e riyalism, volume 2.

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The Causes Responsible for Materialist

tendencies in the West III of IV

Translated from the Persian by Mujahid Husayn

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(Vol XII and XIII)

Eternity of Matter:

Another example of the inadequacy of Western philosophy is to imagine the concept of eternity of matter to be incompatible with faith in God, while in fact there is no such logical implication between this view and denial of God. Rather the divine philosophers believe that faith in God necessarily implies faith in His eternity and continuous creativity (fayyadiyyat), and it is the continuity of His creativity that implies the eternity of creation.

A Russian scholar had written in an article whose Persian translation was published by a magazine few years ago that Ibn Sina vacillated between materialism and idealism.

Why did this scholar express such a view concerning Ibn Sina while one of Ibn Sina's hallmarks is that he has consistently followed a single line in expressing his views and doctrines and there is no wavering and contradiction in his statements. Maybe his powerful and extraordinary memory which made it possible for him not to forget any of his thoughts was one of the causes of this characteristic.

This Russian scholar, since he saw on the one hand that Ibn Sina believed in the eternity of matter and did not believe that time had a beginning, thought him to be a materialist. On the other hand, he found him speaking of God, creation and the First Cause and concluded that Ibn Sina is an idealist. Hence Ibn Sina kept wavering between the two poles of materialism and idealism and had no fixed opinion in this regard.

This Russian scholar had such a view about Ibn Sina because he considered the concept of eternity of matter to be incompatible with the idea that matter and the universe were of Divine creation.

However in Ibn Sina's reasoning, where he has discussed the 'criterion for dependence upon a cause' and identified it to be 'essential contingency' (imkan e-dhati), there exists no such contradiction between these two. Earlier we have discussed the topic of criterion for dependence upon a cause, which happens to be one of the most important of philosophical issues and has been only dealt in Islamic philosophy. It was made clear that the logical implication of being caused and created is not coming into existence in time (huduth-e-zamani); there is nothing to stop an existent from having an eternal and everlasting existence while deriving its existence from a being other than itself. We will have more to say on this issue later on.

God or Freedom?

Predetermination and freedom of will (jabr wa ikhtiyar) is a well-known issue of philosophy, theology and ethics. The discussion is about whether man is compelled in his actions and has no freedom of choice, or is free in his actions. There is another issue discussed in metaphysics which is named qada wa qadar' (Divine ordainments and determinations). Qada' and qadar implies the decisive Divine command which determines the course of the world's events and their limits and extent.

The topic of qada and qadar involves the question whether Divine qada' and qadar is general and covers all things and events or not. In the case of its being general, what is the position of human freedom and free will? Is it possible for Divine qada and qadar to be general and all-inclusive and for man to have a free role at the same time?

The answer is, yes. I have myself discussed this topic in a treatise written on this subject and published under the title "Man and Destiny" (Insan wa sarnawisht) and have proved that there is no incompatibility between God's general qada' on the one hand and man's freedom of will on the other. Of course, that which I have mentioned therein is not something which has been said for the first time by me; whatever I have said is inferred from the Noble Qur'an and others before me have done the same, especially Islamic philosophers, who have adequately discussed this topic.

But today when we look at Europe we find persons like Jean Paul Sartre lost in the labyrinths of this issue, and since they have based their philosophy on choice, freewill and freedom, they do not want to accept God. Jean Paul Sartre says: Since I believe and have faith in freedom I cannot believe and have faith in God, for if I accept God I will necessarily have to accept fate, and if I accept fate I cannot accept individual freedom, and since I want to accept freedom and I love it and have faith in it, I cannot have faith in God.

From the Islamic point of view, faith and belief in God is equivalent to man's freedom and freewill. Freedom in the real sense is the essence of man. Although the Noble Qur'an

introduces God as very great and His will as all- pervasive, it also strongly defends human freedom.

> There has certainly come on man a period of time when he was nothing worthy of mention. We created man of a mingled sperm so as to try him; and We made him hearing and seeing. Surely We guided him upon the way, whether he be thankful or unthankful. (76:1-3)

This implies that man is free, and he may choose the right path or the path of ingratitude (kufran) of his own will.

The Qur'an further states:

> Whosoever desires this present world, We hasten for him therein what We will unto whomsoever We desire; then We appoint for him the hell wherein he shall roast, condemned and rejected. And whosoever desires the world to come and strives after it as he should, being a believer, those, their striving shall be thanked. Each We succour, these and those, from thy Lord's gift; and thy Lords gift is not confined. (17:18-20).

Yes, this is the Qur'anic logic. The Qur'an does not see any incompatibility between God's general qada and man's freedom and freewill.

From the philosophical point of view, too, conclusive proofs which negate any incompatibility between the two have been provided.

However, these philosophers of the twentieth century have imagined that they can be free only if they do not accept God, and that too in the sense that they can in that case break the relation of their will from the past and the present, that is with history and the environment, and with a will severed from history and society choose and build the future, although the issue of determinism and freewill is not related to the question of acceptance or negation of God. By accepting God, too, it is possible to envisage an active and free role for the human will, as it is also possible to negate God and at the same time to challenge the concept of freewill on the basis of the universal law of causation. That is, the root of determinism, or the imagined implication of determinism, lies in the belief in a definite system of cause and effect acknowledged both by the theists as well as the materialists. If there is no incompatibility between a definite system of cause and effect and human freedom and freewill, which in fact there is not, belief in God, too, does not entail negation of freewill. For more details on this issue refer to the book Insan wa sarnawisht. Here we intend to mention a few more examples of the philosophical errors of the West in the field of metaphysics.

Chance, God, or Causation?

For a better understanding of Western thought, both theist and materialist, concerning God, it is proper that we discuss the following topic:

Some imagine that proving God's existence depends on casting doubt on the law of causation and the concept of causal necessity, that is the very thing which constitutes the most basic foundation for proving God's existence. Not only is it the basic foundation for proving God's existence but also the foundation for accepting any scientific and philosophical theory.

Bertrand Russell has assigned a chapter in his book The Scientific Outlook under the heading "Science and Religion." He has posed in this chapter certain issues which in his opinion form the area of conflict between science and religion. One of them is this very issue which he discusses under the heading of "Free Will." The reason he has mentioned it under this heading is that the Westerners imagine freewill and freedom in the human context to imply freedom from the law of causality and causal necessity. Therefore, if we reject the laws of causation and causal necessity in nature, we will be admitting to the presence of some kind of choice in nature. Accordingly Russell raises this issue under the heading "Free Will."

In our opinion, the raising of this issue under this caption is by itself another indication of the level of Western thought on such kind of topics. In any case this is what Russell says:

> Until very recent times theology, while in its Catholic form it admitted free will in human beings, showed an affection for natural law in the universe, tempered only by belief in occasional miracles ...
>
> One of the most remarkable developments in religious apologetics in recent times is the attempt to rescue free will in man by means of ignorance as to the behaviour of atoms ... It is not yet known with any certainty whether there are laws governing the behaviour of single atoms in all respects, or whether the behaviour of such atoms is in part random ... In the atom there are various possible states which do not merge continuously into each other, but are separated by small finite gaps. An atom may hop from one of these states to another, and there are various different hops that it may make. At present no laws are known to decide which of the possible hops will take place on any given occasion, and it is suggested that the atom is not subject to laws at all in this respect, but has what might be called, by analogy, "free will." Eddington, in his book on the Nature of the Physical World, has made great play with this possibility. [1]

Russell then goes on to given an outline of the history of the principle of non-necessity and adds:

> I am surprised, I repeat, that Eddington should have appealed to this principle in connexion with the question of free will, for the principle does nothing whatever to

> show that the course of nature is not determined. [2]

Then he states that that which is understood from quantum mechanics is not the negation of causality but the negation of the principle of necessity (principle of the necessity of an effect's dependence upon a cause). He says:

> There is nothing whatever in the Principle of Indeterminacy to show that any physical event is uncaused ... Returning now to the atom and its supposed free will, it should be observed that it is not known that the behaviour of the atom is capricious. It is false to say the behaviour of the atom is known to be capricious, and it is also false to say the behaviour is known to be not capricious. Science has quite recently discovered that the atom is not subject to the laws of the older physics, and some physicists have somewhat rashly jumped to the conclusion that the atom is not subject to law at all ... It is very rash to erect a theological superstructure upon a piece of ignorance which may be only momentary. There is, moreover, a purely empirical objection to the belief in free will. Wherever it has been possible to subject the behaviour of animals or of human beings to careful scientific observation, it has been found, as in Pavlov's experiments, that scientific laws are just as discoverable here as in any other sphere. It is true that we cannot predict human actions with any completeness, but this is quite sufficiently accounted for by the complication of the mechanism, and by no means demands the hypothesis of complete lawlessness, which is found to be false wherever it can be carefully tested. Those who desire caprice in the physical world seem to me to have failed to realize what this would involve. All inference in regard to the course of nature is causal, and if nature is not subject to causal laws all such inference must fail. We cannot, in that case, know anything outside of our personal experience; indeed, strictly speaking, we can only know our experience in the present moment, since all memory depends upon casual laws. If we cannot infer the existence of other people, or even of our own past, how much less can we infer God, or anything else that the theologians desire ...
>
> There is, in fact, no good reason whatever for supposing that the behaviour of atoms is not subject to law. It is only quite recently that experimental methods have been able to throw any light on the behaviour of individual atoms, and it is no wonder if the laws of this behaviour have not yet been discovered. [3]

We endorse Russell's opinion that a satisfactory proof has not been provided to prove the lawlessness of atomic movements, and further contend that it is impossible that such a proof exist or be produced in the future. Similarly, we affirm his view that if the law of causation were not valid and the universe were lawless, all our inferences about the universe, God, and everything else would be in vain.

That which Russell has said in answer to those who claim the universe to be lawless (or

lawless at least in subatomic particles) is the same as what Islamic philosophers have said in reply to the Ash'arites who tried to deny causal necessity. I have expressed my view about this principle in the footnotes of "The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism" and in the book 'Man and Destiny'.

But here I cannot refrain from expressing my surprise at the following two points. The first that a group of so-called theists have tried to prove the existence of God by negating causation, or in their own words, through freewill and negation of causal necessity and congruence between cause and effect (i.e. the notion that a certain cause can produce only a certain kind of effect). Anyone even with little acquaintance with Islamic metaphysics knows that acceptance of the principle of causation and causal necessity and congruence between cause and effect is part of the ABC of Islamic metaphysics.

The second point is that Mr. Russell imagines that the only blow delivered to science by the negation of the law of causality is our inability to generalize the results of scientific experiments, for the generalization of an experiment is dependent upon the theory that 'like causes in like circumstances act in a similar manner.' He is unaware of the fact that by negating the principle of causation, even in cases where all aspects of a thing have been experimented we cannot acquire the knowledge of it within the experimented limits, because our knowledge of external reality acquired through the senses and experimentation is itself dependent upon the law of causation. If the law of causation were not there, we would arrive at nothing. Mr. Russell repeatedly emphasizes this point in his book The Scientific Outlook that modern physics is advancing towards the concept of lawlessness of the universe.

The basic point is that the law of causation is not a physical law but a law of philosophy; consequently physics can neither prove it nor refute it. But Mr. Russell does not believe in philosophical laws independent of the achievements of the sciences and is therefore forced to remain bewildered in this quagmire.

In the footnotes of 'The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism' in the article, "The Origins of Multiplicity in Cognition," I have discussed the source of the concept of causality and the manner in which the mind arrives at this concept and affirms its validity. The reader is referred to that book.

The Concept of Creation:

Among the confusions present in Western philosophical thought concerning the problem of causation is the analysis of the concept of creation. What is meant by creation? Does it mean that the Creator gives existence to a non-existent? Or does it imply that He brings an existent into existence? None of the two alternatives is rational and a third alternative is also unimaginable.

In other words, that which is created by a power either exists or is non-existent. If it exists, creating it amounts to 'acquiring the acquired' (tahsil e hasil), because creating what exists implies giving a thing something which it already possesses, like a straightening a straight line. And if it is non-existent, creating it amounts to kind of a contradiction, because creating a non-existent implies changing non-existence into existence, and this involves the conversion of non-existence into existence and non-being into being, and this is a contradiction.

Hence creation is either the changing of existence into existence or the changing of non-existence into existence. The former involves acquiring the acquired and while the latter results in a contradiction, and both are impossible. This is the well-known paradox in this regard. Among Islamic scholars, the one to develop this paradox more than anyone else is Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi.

Islamic philosophers have devoted a separate chapter to this issue, known as the 'problem of making' (mas'alah-ye ja'l) and have provided an excellent and precise analysis of the concepts of causation, creation, and the like, thereby resolving this paradox.

First, they have demonstrated that if this argument were correct we will have to set aside completely the notion of causation regardless of whether it is natural causation-that is, bringing about motion and changing a thing into something else, or Divine causation-that is, generation and creation.

Secondly, they have established that there are two possible kinds of causation and making (ja'l). One of them is simple making (ja'l-e basit) and the other compound making (ja'l-e murakkab). All those paradoxes have risen because all instances of creation and causation have been imagined as belonging to the class of compound making and causation. Here we do not intend to study this problem which needs an elaborate treatment, and to discuss all its various aspects will greatly prolong this discussion. Here our sole purpose is to point out the causes responsible for materialist tendencies from the viewpoint of the West's philosophical inadequacies, and so we are forced to discuss this issue to the extent necessary to reveal one of the roots of these tendencies. One of these roots pertains to the remaining unsolved of the concept of creation, or in other words, the absence of an accurate analysis of the concept of causation, which has taken place in Islamic philosophy in the well-known discussion on ja'l.

Here I will again cite Russell in this regard in his capacity as a materialist Western philosopher. In the aforementioned book and chapter, Bertrand Russell has discussed a topic under the heading "God the Creator." There he has mentioned the famous theory of modern physics based on the world's gradual disintegration and running down and hence having a end. This in turn proves that the world has a beginning from the point of view of time, because that which has no beginning has no end, and that which has an end must have a beginning, although it is possible that a thing may have a beginning without having an end. From here it has been concluded that the world has been created by a power and that the view

of the materialists is wrong.

Russell, while trying to explain that this new theory does not corroborate the theist thesis, says:

> One of the most serious difficulties confronting science at the present time is the difficulty derived from the fact that the universe appears to be running down. There are, for example, radio-active elements in the world. These are perpetually disintegrating into less complex elements, and no process by which they can be built up is known. This, however, is not the most important or difficult respect in which the world is running down. Although we do not know of any natural process by which complex elements are built up out of simpler ones, we can imagine such processes, and it is possible that they are taking place somewhere. But when we come to the second law of thermodynamics we encounter a more fundamental difficulty.
>
> The second law of thermodynamics states, roughly speaking, that things left to themselves tend to get into a muddle and do not tidy themselves up again. It seems that once upon a time the universe was all tidy, with everything in its proper place, and that ever since then it has been growing more and more disorderly, until nothing but a drastic spring-cleaning can restore it to its pristine order. [4]

Russell, after giving clarifications in this regard, goes on with his explanation:

> As we trace the course of the world backwards in time, we arrive after some finite number of years (rather more than four thousand and four, however), at a state of the world which could not have been preceded by any other, if the second law of thermodynamics was then valid. This initial state of the world would be that in which energy was distributed as unevenly as possible. [5]

Then he goes on to quote Eddington and speaks about his hesitation and bewilderment concerning which theory should be eventually chosen. Eddington says:

> The difficulty of an infinite past is appalling. It is inconceivable that we are the heirs of an infinite time of preparation; it is not less inconceivable that there was once a moment with no moment preceding it. [6]

Finally Russell himself expresses his opinion in this manner

> The second law of thermodynamics may not hold in all times and places, or we may be mistaken in thinking the universe spatially finite; but as arguments of this nature go, it is a good one, and I think we ought provisionally to accept the hypothesis that the world had a beginning at some definite, though unknown, date. Are we to infer from

this that the world was made by a Creator? Certainly not, if we are to adhere to the canons of valid scientific inference. There is no reason whatever why the universe should not have begun spontaneously, except that it seems odd that it should do so; but there is no law of nature to the effect that things which seem odd to us must not happen.

To infer a Creator is to infer a cause, and causal inferences are only admissible in science when they proceed from observed causal laws. Creation out of nothing is an occurrence which has not been observed [7]. There is, therefore, no better reason to suppose that the world was caused by a Creator than to suppose that it was uncaused; either equally contradicts the causal laws that we can observe. [8]

That which has been quoted consists of two parts. The first is about modern physics, and expressing any opinion about it is outside the competence of metaphysics. From the metaphysical viewpoint, creation cannot be limited and have a beginning in time. Similarly it cannot stop at a particular limit. Divine effusion is interminable and infinite with respect to both its beginning and end.

The present universe as conceived by physics could be a single link in the chain of Divine effusion which comprises of numerous inter-connected links, but it cannot be the only link. From the standpoint of metaphysics, the meaning of the statement that the universe came into existence in finite time is that this part of creation has a beginning in time, not that the process of creation itself began in finite time.

The second part consists of the philosophical ideas of this twentieth century philosopher. The real purpose of our citing the above-mentioned passages was for the sake of this part. Now that modern physics affirms the theory of gradual disintegration and running down of the universe, he prefers to accept that the universe came into being at a finite though unknown point in time. And now that we are compelled to accept that the universe began in finite time, there are two possibilities: first that the universe was brought into existence by a creator at the point of its beginning, the other is that it came into existence spontaneously at that point without the interference of any agent. He claims that from the point of view of causal laws there can be no preference of any kind between the two possibilities considering; both equally contradict causal laws. The coming into existence of the universe as an act of a creative power is also against causal laws because the causal laws which we are able to observe only justify conclusions which follow from the principle of causation. That is, it recognizes causality and being caused (ma'luliyyat) only in cases where the cause itself is in turn an effect of another cause. But if a cause and effect are assumed where the cause itself is not an effect, this contradicts the principle of causality recognized by science.

If a cause and effect are assumed wherein the cause in its turn is not an effect of another cause this implies that creation has taken place from non- existence, and creation from non-

existence is impossible by experience.

Firstly, Mr. Russell imagines that the law of causation belongs to the category of observable and sensible things. He has not paid attention, or has not wished to do so, that causality is not something based on the sense perception. That which is perceived is succession of events and not causality, nor the general laws of cause and effect. Rather, even succession and sequence are also not perceived by the senses but are inferred and abstracted.

Secondly, he says that the law of cause and effect only endorses such causation in which the cause is in turn an effect of another cause, and the idea of a causation wherein the cause is not an effect of another cause contradicts the law of causation.

We ask, 'Why'? Suppose we even consider the law of causation to be an empirical law; where is such a limitation in this law? Does our notion of causation imply anything except this that every phenomenon needs an agent to bring it into existence? But what experiment leads us to conclude that this agent itself must be something which has come into existence with the help of another agent, and similarly the latter agent, and so on ad infinitum?

Thirdly, what is meant by saying that 'observation shows that creation from nothing is impossible'? Are necessity and impossibility empirical concepts? Is impossibility or necessity a phenomenon and a physical condition susceptible to experimentation and perceivable by the senses? At the most that which can be said is that creation from nothing has not been empirically observed, but what is meant by the statement that its impossibility has been empirically proved?

Fourthly, what is the difference between a causation wherein the cause is itself an effect of another cause and a causation in which the cause is not an effect of another cause so as to conclude that in the former instance creation is not from non-being while in the latter it amounts to creation from nothing? In both the cases there is a a being dependent upon another being and originating from another existent. If creation has taken place from nothing, it has done so in both the cases, and if it has not taken place from nothing it has not done so in both the cases.

Fifthly, according to this philosopher, in any case modern physics has declared the law of causation to have exceptions, because this physics compels us to accept a starting point for the universe and there are no more than two possibilities for the origin of the universe, and both the possibilities violate the law of causation with equal force.

Therefore, we must accept that all our inferences concerning nature and the universe are invalid, because earlier Mr. Russell has himself conceded that all inferences derived by us concerning nature are founded upon the law of causation, and if nature is not subject to law these inferences in their entirety would be unreliable.

The realm of nature is either subject to the law of causation or it is not If it is, then its coming into existence must also be subject to the law of causation; if it is not, it is not possible that nature should come into existence in an arbitrary manner and then become orderly.

The following words of Russell are just as true of himself. He says:

> The principle of causality may be true or may be false, but the person who finds the hypothesis of its falsity cheering is failing to realize the implications of his own theory. He usually retains unchallenged all those causal laws which he finds convenient, as, for example, that his food will nourish him and that his bank will honour his cheques so long as his account is in funds, while rejecting all those that he finds inconvenient. This, however, is altogether too naive a procedure. [9]

It appears that these remarks are more true of Mr. Russell than anyone else. What we have observed concerning Mr. Russell's approach to the subject of God is that it is not logic and reasoning that have led him to deny God. Instead a kind of disinclination or rather a negative prejudice is apparent in him. An elaborate psychological analysis of his is required to disclose the source of this disinclination. The metaphysics and the knowledge of the supernatural which he acquired during childhood from his grandmother which he repeatedly mentions in his works, should not be ignored in this psychological analysis

Argument from Design:

The simplest and the most popular argument provided for the existence of God is the argument from design. The Noble Qur'an refers to the world's existents as 'ayat,' that is, signs of God. It is generally said that the presence of design and order in things is a proof of the existence of an ordering power. Unlike other arguments such as the argument of the First Mover, the argument of necessity and contingency (burhan-e wujub wa imkan), the argument of coming into existence and eternity (burhan-e huduth wa qidam), and the argument of the Truthful (burhan-e siddiqin), which are essentially philosophical, theological and rational, this argument is a natural and essentially empirical argument. It resembles all other arguments and proofs which are products of man's experience.

In the West, David Hume, the eighteenth-century English philosopher, cast doubts upon this argument and since then to our present times many Westerners believe that the argument from design, which is the greatest support of the theists, has lost its credibility. The loss of credibility of the arguments for God's existence, especially the argument from design, is one of the causes responsible for materialist tendencies in the West. Now we will examine the criticism of Mr. Hume.

Hume has written a book by the name Dialogues concerning Natural Religion in which a

fictitious person named Cleanthes defends the argument from design while another fictitious character called Philo attacks it, and in this manner a dialogue takes place between the two. Although Hume himself is not a materialist, he tries to prove that the argument presented by the theists do not have a scientific basis, and that the same is true of the arguments of the materialists. He believes that faith is a matter of the heart, and if the argument from design is adopted as a rational criterion, it can be only said that:

> The order in nature, in spite of all that has been said, suggests, if it does not Prove "That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence." Beyond this, we have no way to extend the argument in order to establish anything about the characteristics of this cause or these causes. [10]

Hume himself is philosophically a skeptic and an agnostic, but he insists on proving that the argument from design is incomplete, or rather untenable. It is said about him that:

> All his life, David Hume was concerned with the merits of various arguments which purported to establish the existence of a Divine Being. In his early notebooks and letters, he continually reflected about the problem, pointing out flaws or fallacies involved in the arguments of various religious writers. In various works, Hume made some incisive criticism of the reasoning employed by some of the religious philosophers. Possibly because of its currency in his day, one of his major undertakings was a thoroughgoing critique of the argument from design. He worked on this, off and on, for about twenty-five years, perfecting his famous Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. [11]

Hume states the argument from design in Cleanthes's words in the following manner:

> Look around the world, contemplate the whole and every party of it, you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy which ravishes into admiration all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance of human design, thought, wisdom and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble, and that the Author of nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work which he has executed. By this argument a posteriori, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity and his similarity to human mind and intelligence. [12]

Hume, speaking through Philo the skeptic, refutes Cleanthes's argument in the following words:

> If we see a house, Cleanthes, we conclude, with the greatest certainty, that it had an architect or builder because this is precisely that species of effect which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you, will not affirm that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause.
>
> For aught we can know a priori, matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as mind does; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving that the several elements, form an internal unknown cause, may fall into the most exquisite arrangement, than to conceive that their ideas, in the great universal mind, from a like internal unknown cause, fall into that arrangement.
>
> And will any man tell me with a serious countenance that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and art like the human because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning it were requisite that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient, surely, t hat we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance ....
>
> Can you pretend to show any such similarity between the fabric of a house and the generation of a universe? Have you ever seen nature in any such situation as resembles the first arrangement of the elements? Have worlds ever been formed under your eye, and have you had the leisure to observe the whole progress of the phenomenon, from the first appearance of order to its final consummation? If you have, then cite your experience and deliver your theory ... [13]
>
> Secondly, you have no reason, on your theory, for ascribing perfection to the Deity, even in His finite capacity, or for supposing Him free from every error, mistake, or incoherences, in His undertakings ... At least, you must acknowledge that it is impossible for us to tell, from our limited views, whether this system contains any great faults or deserves any considerable praise if compared to other possible and even real systems. Could a peasant, if the Aeneid were read to him, pronounce that poem to be absolutely faultless, or even assign to it its proper rank among the productions of human wit, he who had never seen any other production?
>
> But were this world ever so perfect a production, it must still remain uncertain whether all the excellences of the work can justly be ascribed to the workman. If we survey a ship, what an exalted idea we must form of the ingenuity of the carpenter who framed

> so complicated, useful, and beautiful a machine? And what surprise must we feel when we find him a stupid mechanic who imitated others, and copies an art which, through a long succession of ages, after multiplied trials, mistakes, corrections, deliberations and controversies, had been gradually improving? Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out; much labour lost, many fruitless trials made, and a slow but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world-making. In such subjects, who can determine where the truth, nay, who can conjecture where the probability lies, amidst a great number of hypotheses which may be proposed, and a still greater which may be imagined? [14]
>
> We have no data to establish any system of cosmogony (a theory about the origins of the universe). Our experience, so imperfect in itself and so limited both in extent and duration, can afford us no probable conjecture concerning the whole of things. But if we must needs fix on some hypothesis, by what rule, pray, ought we to determine our choice? Is there any other rule than the greater similarity of the objects compared? And does not a plant or an animal, which springs from vegetation or generation, bear a stronger resemblance to the world than does any artificial machine, which arises from reason and design? [15]

[Hume pointed out that]

> the analogical reasoning employed in the argument does not provide a basis for any conclusion about the moral attributes of the designer of nature, even if one concludes that there is such a designer. The conception of a moral, just, good, deity does not follow from the comparison of natural and human effects. If the designer is supposed to be like the human designer, then we would have no reason to suppose that there is any special moral quality belonging to the author of nature. When one examines the product, i.e., nature, and observes all its unpleasant features, e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes, the wars of one part of nature upon another, can we conclude that the planning was that of a just and good intelligence? [16]

The summary of the argument from design as stated by Hume is as follows:

a. The argument from design is not a purely rational argument based upon necessary axioms; it is an empirical argument which is derived by natural experience and must therefore fulfil the conditions of empirical proofs.

b. This argument claims that extensive experience of nature shows that a perfect similarity exists between nature and human artifacts such as machines, ships and houses and it becomes evident that the universe is exactly like a big machine from the viewpoint of the relationship of its constituents with one another and the harmony that exists between the structure of the universe and the effects and consequences deriving from it.

c. In accordance with the general principle employed in empirical arguments, the likeness of effects is a proof of the likeness of causes, and considering that human artifacts are the creation of a spirit, mind and thought it follows that the universe too is a creation of a great spirit, intelligence, and thought.

Following is the summary of his criticism of this argument:

a. The basis of the argument, that is, the similarity between the works of nature and human artefects, is founded upon the idea that the universe, from the viewpoint of the composition of its parts, is like a house or a car whose parts have been assembled by an external intelligent power, mind and spirit, for a series of aims. But this similarity is not complete; that is, it is not certain and definite, only probable. It cannot be said that the resemblance of the universe with a car is greater than the former's resemblance with a plant or an animal, which has an internal regulating power and is in no way controlled from outside.

b. This would have been an empirical proof if it had been repeatedly experimented with, that is, if worlds had been created repeatedly in the same form and conditions by conscious and humanlike beings, and we had found through experimentation a connection between this kind of effect and a humanlike cause. After seeing a world resembling the experimented worlds we could rule that this world, too, like those worlds, has a humanlike cause. However, such is not the case. The experience we have of making a ship, house, or a city is not the same as our experience about the world. The origin and formation of the world, which has taken place gradually during billions of years, does not resemble the building of a ship or a house.

c. Furthermore, this argument seeks to prove the existence of God, the Exalted, Who represents ultimate wisdom, infinite power, and absolute perfection. Even if supposedly it is proved that the source of this world is a humanlike being, it is insufficient for the purpose. This argument would have been sufficient for proving the existence of God had we found by experience that this world is the most perfect of possible worlds and conforms to ultimate wisdom. However, for us who know only this world and have not seen any other to compare and contrast it with our own, it is not possible to understand whether this world has been created on the basis of ultimate wisdom and that it is the best possible world. It is just like asking a villager who has just read one book in his life (even if it is the greatest masterpiece) to declare that the only book he has read is the best book ever written.

d. Supposing that this world is the best possible world and a better world is not possible, even then it will not prove the existence of God, the Exalted, Who (as presumed) is absolute perfection, self-sufficient and the necessary existent, because this argument would be a proof of the existence of God if it proves, over and above that this is the best possible world and a better world is unimaginable, that this is the first world which God has created, that He had no previous experience of creation and has not gradually developed His craftsmanship, and that He has not copied any other creation. But none of these matters are provable. How can it be

ascertained that the world's creator has not imitated another creations? How do we know that He has not been repeatedly experimenting with the technique of world-making since eternity and has gradually achieved this great progress in the craft?

e. Apart from all this, in our present world, we find deficiencies, evil, and ugliness, such as floods, earthquakes, diseases, etc., which do not accord with perfect Divine wisdom.

This was a summary of Hume's criticisms rendered in a relatively Eastern idiom.

Now we may proceed to examine these criticisms:

1. Mr. Hume's idea concerning the argument from design being essentially an empirical argument is mistaken. Empirical arguments are involved in cases where we want to discover the relationship of a particular empirical phenomenon with another empirical phenomenon.

In other words, an empirical argument is valid only when an enquiry concerns discovering the relationship between two natural phenomena, and not when it is meant to discover the relationship between nature and the supranatural. To put it differently, experimentation is possible where we observe a certain phenomenon in nature and want to discover its cause or causes through experimenting, or intend to ascertain the consequences and effects of that phenomenon. For example, by experimenting we discover the relationship between heating water and its transformation into steam and between its cooling and its transformation into ice. When we see two things taking place one after another and are also certain that nothing else is involved, we conclude that one of the two is the cause of the other. Hence the criterion for an empirical relationship is that both sides of the relationship be observable.

Now let us see whether the argument from design in the world for proving the existence of a conscious designer is an emperical argument or not. But before we examine the nature of the argument from design, it is necessary that we examine the nature of another common argument which Hume regards as totally empirical and considers the argument from design to be somewhat similar to it. This argument involves inferring existence of thought and intellect in man from the artifacts created by man.

Is this common inference of ours regarding persons wherein we discover their intelligence, thought, and level of knowledge by observing their artifacts, in fact an empirical proof of the kind employed in discovering the relationship between natural phenomena, such as the relationship between heat and vaporization or between cooling and freezing? In other words, is the discovery of intelligence, consciousness and knowledge of human creatures from observing their artifacts an empirical inference, or is it a rational inference (burhan-e 'aqli)?

How do we know, for example, that Ibn Sina was a philosopher or a physician, or that Sa'di was poet and a writer of taste? How do we, who always come across various friends, teachers,

students and classmates, know that one of them is bright, the other dull, another knowledgeable and a fourth ignorant? Obviously from the effects which derive from them, from their speech that we hear, from their behaviour that we observe, and their works and writings which we study.

We cannot directly see or touch their intelligence, minds and knowledge. Basically things such as thought and knowledge are incapable of being sensibly perceived and felt. Supposing that we dissect their brains or take a scan of their contents, we may possibly see certain structures in them, but we cannot observe their thoughts. Rather, we do not have a direct perception of these qualities except what we personally possess of thought, intelligence, and consciousness. We have a direct access only to our own knowledge, intelligence and thought, and that is all. Accordingly no intelligence and thought is accessible to us for experimenting so that we may determine the relationship between it and some other factor through experimentation. Rather, from an empirical point of view we are unaware of the existence of any other intelligence or thought apart from our own.

But why and on what basis do we affirm the existence of intelligence and thought in all other human beings and do not entertain any doubt about it? Further, on what basis do we, through observing man-made objects, artifacts and the manifestations of their work, infer the level of their intelligence, their consciousness, thought, knowledge, tastes and feelings. Didn't Descartes say that all animals with the exception of man were unconscious machines which have been so created that they react like living creatures? How do we know that the same is not true of other people? And how do we know that only animals are machines, without souls and consciousness, that show signs similar to those of living creatures and that all human beings except myself are not such? I am not directly aware of the existence of any intelligence, thoughts and feelings except my own, and may be that they exist only in me and none else. What empirical proof is there that it is not so? The presence of intelligence and thought within me is not sufficient for concluding that something exactly similar to what is in me is present in others. Because in logical terminology this is reasoning by analogy, that is, considering an individual as the criterion for other individuals, not an empirical proof which involves experimentation with a large number of individuals of a certain species to the point of acquiring certainty that the properties identified are not particular to the individuals involved in the experiment but belong to all the individuals of that species.

As a matter of fact, the inference of intelligence and consciousness in human beings from their effects and artifacts is neither by way of analogy nor by way of empirical inference; rather it is a kind of rational proof. It is true that man directly experiences the presence of such existents as intelligence, will, and thought only within himself and becomes aware of their action, which is to think, decide and to choose, that is to select from among a large number of alternatives one most appropriate to his goal. But where he studies the activities of others, although he does not observe their intelligence and consciousness, he does observe their action of selecting in their activities. That is, on studying their activities he finds that they constantly select from among the various kinds of activities, or, rather, from among a

thousand different options of which only one gives the desired result. While the other options are fruitless that particular one leads to the desired result. They also make their selection in a way to obtain the desired result and disregard the rest.

For example, if a person holds a pen in hand and intends to draw it on a piece of paper to sketch some figure, there are thousands of possible figures which may be drawn, for example the shape of the alphabet mim If he continues to move the pen on the paper, there are a thousand possible shapes which may be drawn of which one may be the alphabet nun. Again if he continues this act, out of a thousand possible figures one could be in the shape of the alphabet ta'. Now, if he holds a pen and its movements give shape to the word, it may be said that the shape drawn had one in a billion (1000 x 1000 x 1000) chance of materializing. Now if he continues this act and writes a few lines and together they takes the form of the following passage:

> It is the favour of God, the Glorious and the Mighty, that His obedience results in nearness to Him, and gratitude to Him a double blessing. Every breath that is drawn prolongs life and when exhaled brings delight to the soul; thus in each breath are two blessings and for each blessing thanks are due ...

the chance that all these alphabets have come together accidentally and not as a result of selection, that is, as a result of attention and choice, is so remote as to be unimaginable. That is, human reason normally considers it impossible. It is on this basis that it makes the judgement affirming the existence of a power of selection, which is the same thing as intelligence and will.

This is the reason why we say that the inference of intelligence and thought in man from human artifacts and effects is neither based on analogical reasoning-which merely involves making oneself the criterion for others, like someone who having felt a stomach pain concludes that all people have stomach pains-nor on the basis of empirical evidence. Because such evidence here would be the establishment of the relation of such artifacts to human intelligence by repeated experiments, that is, by directly observing intelligence and its effects and discovering their connection. Rather this argument is a kind of rational inference which is similar to the inference which the mind makes for affirming the truth of historical reports received from numerous sources (mutawatir). [17]

Thus we see that our knowledge of the intelligence and consciousness of other people is not the result of empirical evidence, to say nothing of the argument from design, which establishes the relationship between the universe and God, the Exalted.

Recently this fallacy has found fancy with some Muslim Arab writers and their Iranian followers. They have imagined that the Qur'anic call for studying the signs of creation (ayat) is in fact an invitation to an empirical knowledge of God. They have imagined that when we

know God through the study of the signs of creation, our knowledge of God is based on empirical evidence. From here they arrive at another ridiculous conclusion: "The method to be followed in theological issues is the same as the one followed by natural scientists in studying nature, and that there is no need for us to resort to those complicated and subtle philosophical discussions dealing with theological issues. Instead of bearing the stigma of ignorance or failure to understand them, we declare all of them to be baseless."

They are ignorant of the fact that the limits of experience only extend up to the knowledge of God's creation. The knowledge of God with the help of the understanding of the creation acquired by empirical means is a kind of a pure rational inference.

2. Mr. Hume has imagined that the theists want to prove that the world has a complete resemblance to human artifacts, and on the basis that similarity of effects is proof of similarity of causes, want to prove that since the world is totally similar to a car or a house, it too has a maker similar to the maker of a machine or a house.

Mr. Hume tells them that this is not the case; the world, more than its resemblance to a ship or a car, resembles the systematic and self-regulating mechanism of a plant or animal.

Firstly, in reply to Mr. Hume it may remarked that the meaning of his words is that the world is not like a car or a ship, but is rather like itself! Did he expect the world to be unlike itself? Are not plants and animals a part of this world? In fact, the discussion is all about the plants and animals which in his own words have been so created that they are self-regulating like a most advanced machine, a thousand times more complicated than man-made ships and machines. Therefore, the signs of creation in a plant or an animal are more evident than in a ship or a machine. Consequently, if the maker of the ship and the machine is endowed with intelligence and thought, there is a greater reason that the creator of the universe, whose creative power is manifested in plants and animals, should possess intelligence and wisdom.

Secondly, the remark of Mr. Hume about this argument that it essentially involves a kind of analogy (tashbih) and its purpose is to prove the presence of perfect resemblance between the works of the Creator of nature and human artifacts, is wrong. It is impossible that the works of the Creator of nature (God) perfectly resemble products of human make; rather, as the Creator of nature is beyond resemblance to man from the point of view of essence and attributes, so also He is beyond likeness from the angle of act and creation.

Man is a part of nature, and being such he is an existent which is in a continuous state of becoming and moving towards perfection (takamul). All his efforts are directed towards moving from the state of potentiality (quwwah) to that of actuality (fi'l), and from deficiency towards perfection. All the efforts of the human being are a kind of a movement from potentiality to act, and from deficiency towards perfection.

Similarly, man being a part of nature and not its creator, his dispensations concerning nature are of the form of establishing an artificial (unnatural) relation between the parts of nature. Human artifacts like cities, houses and ships consist of natural materials arranged in an artificial order with an aim and purpose which is the aim and purpose of the maker himself and not the aim of the thing made. That maker wants to achieve his goal and purpose through this artificial order.

Thus the two essential characteristics of human artifacts are:

a. The relationship between its parts is artificial and not natural.

b. The aim and objective involved in making it is the aim and objective of the maker. That is, it is the maker who achieves a certain aim and removes a deficiency from himself and moves from potentiality to actuality through the means of the artifact.

None of these two characteristics can be possibly present in the creation of God, the Exalted. Neither is it possible for the connection between the parts of the creation to be an unnatural one, nor is it possible that the purpose of the creation be the purpose of the Creator. Rather, the connection between the various parts of the creation will have to be natural, just like the one seen in the different parts of the solar system or the atom, or the elements of a natural compound, or the constituents of plants, animals and man.

This is what the metaphysicians imply when they say that 'the final causes of God's acts are all final causes of the act (fi'l), and not those of the Agent (fail) or when they say: Human wisdom implies the selection of the best means for the best of purposes, while Divine wisdom implies bringing the existents to reach their own purposes.

The requirement of wisdom and providence,

is to direct all contingents to their ultimate ends.

This is the meaning of their words when they say:

The higher does not turn towards the lower.

A station belonging to a higher ontic realm does not seek its end in the lower realms. And this is what they imply when they say that the necessary implication of the creation of existents and their issuing forth from the Absolutely Perfect Essence is that all of them have an end and it is love which pervades all existents; and the end of all ends (ghayat al-ghayat) is the Exalted Divine Essence.

This again is the meaning of their statement that human agency is an agency by intention

(failiyyah bil-qasd), whereas the agency of God, the Exalted, is agency by providence (fa'liyyah bi al-inayah). In reality, the ideas of Hume and all Western philosophers from the earliest times to the present day concerning the argument from design are childish and amateurish, basing as they do upon the notion that this argument supposes God to be a craftsman like human craftsmen and arguing concerning the existence and non-existence of such a creator. Whereas by proving the existence of such a creator we would not have proved God but a creature of the level of man.

An examination of Hume's rhetorical rendition of the argument from design, which has overshadowed Western philosophy for about three centuries, brings to light once again the weak foundations of philosophy in the West, whether religious or materialist. It shows that the Western notion of the argument from design is not at all philosophical. That which has been discussed in Islamic philosophy under the title 'inayah (providence) has been unknown in the West. The Westerners' conception of this argument has been that of the common man, or at the most of the level of Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite theologians, and not of the order of that of Islamic philosophers and metaphysicians.

3. Mr. Hume says: Supposing this argument proves that the Creator of the world possesses an intelligence and consciousness similar to those of man, even then the claim, which is to prove God's infinite perfection, remains unproved.

Hume's mistake here is that he has imagined that those who consider God as absolute and infinite perfection do so on the basis of the argument from design, which in his opinion is an empirical proof.

We have mentioned in the fifth volume of 'The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism' that the value of argument from design is solely limited to the extent of carrying us up to the frontiers of the supranatural. This argument only proves that nature has something beyond itself to which it is subject and that beyond is conscious of itself and its acts. Regarding whether this transcendent is necessary or contingent, eternal or emergent (hadith), one or multiple, finite or infinite, omniscient and omnipotent or not, lie outside the limits of this argument. These are issues which wholly and solely belong to the domain of metaphysics, and metaphysics proves them with the help of other arguments.

4. Mr. Hume says: Supposing that our world is the most perfect world possible; but how do we know that the creator of the world has not copied it from some other place or that he has not perfected his craftsmanship gradually through practice?

This criticism too arises from Hume's ignorance of the limits of the application of the argument from design. He has imagined that all the issues of metaphysics are derived from a single argument which is the argument from design. In the second and fifth volumes of 'The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism' we have remarked that the application of

argument from design involves proving that nature is not something left to itself and that the forces of nature are subject. Nature, in the terminology of the philosophers, is an agent by subordination (fa'il bil- taskhir). In other words, nature has a supranatural transcending it which rules and administers it. The argument from design, whosc application is limited to this extent, is both clear and sufficient within its own llimits. But as to what is the state of the supranatural, whether its perfection is essential or acquired, whether it has been acquired gradually or is eternal like its essence, and so on-all these issues are capable of being researched with the help of a separate set of arguments. And supposing that they are incapable of being researched with the help of other arguments and are among issues which will always remain unknown to man-though certainly it is not so and they are capable of being researched-this does not decrease the value of the argument from design. The objective of the argument from design is to lead us from nature to the threshold of the supranatural. That which lies beyond this threshold lies outside the scope of this argument.

5. Mr. Hume has mentioned the matter of evil, epidemics, floods and earthquakes as a negation of the presence of a rational pattern in the world.

Considering that we have discussed this topic in detail in the book 'Adl-e Ilahi ('Divine Justice'), we shall refrain from taking it up here and refer the reader to that book.

Notes:

[1] Bertrand Russell, The Scientific Outlook, (New York: W.W Norton & Co. 1931) 1st ed., Persian transl. By Hasan Mansur, Jahanbini ye 'Ilmi, pp82-8

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp92-3

[5] Ibid., 94

[6] Ibid., p94

[7] This sentence in the Persian translation of this passage from Russell cited by the author has been translated as follows: "Observation shows that creation out of nothing is impossible." This error in the translation affects the author's criticism relating to this part of Russell's statements. Editor

[8] Ibid., pp96-7

[9] Ibid., pp87-8

[10] Richard H. Popkin & Avrum Stroll, Philosophy Made Simple, p106

[11] Ibid., p103

[12] Ibid., p102

[13] Ibid., p103

[14] Ibid., p104

[15] Ibid., p105

[16] Ibid.

[17] Authors note: We have studied and discussed this topic in greater detail in our studies on epistemology (shenakht), which we hope to publish in the future.

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The Causes Responsible for Materialist

tendencies in the West IV of IV

Translated from the Persian by Mujahid Husayn

Martyr Murtadha Mutahhari

(Vol XII and XIII)

The Inadequacy of the Social and Political Concepts:

The third cause of the growth of materialist tendencies was the inadequacy of certain social and political concepts. In the history of political philosophy we find that when certain social and political ideas were propounded in the West and the issue of natural rights, especially the people's right to sovereignty, was raised, a group advocated despotism. It did not recognize any right for the masses vis-a-vis the rulers, and the only thing it recognized for the people was their duty and obligation to the latter. In order to lend justification to their arguments in favour of despotic rule, they took recourse in theology, claiming that the rulers were not answerable to the people but only to God, while the people were answerable to the rulers and owed a duty to them. The people had no right to question the ruler's actions or to assign him a duty. Only God was entitled to question him and call him to account. Thus the people had no right over the ruler, although he had rights over them which it was their duty to fulfill.

As a natural consequence, there arose in the minds a kind of artificial connection and implication between faith in God on the one hand and belief in the necessity of submitting to the ruler and forfeiting all rights to question someone whom God has elected to protect the people and whom He has made answerable only to Himself. Similarly, there arose a necessary 'mplication between the right of popular sovereignty on the one hand and atheism on the other.

Dr. Mahmud Sina'i, in the book Azadi-ye fard wa qudrat-e dawlat, ("Individual Liberty and the Power of the State") writes: "In Europe political absolutism and the idea that freedom was basically the State's prerogative and not of the individual, was linked with belief in God."

It came to be thought that if one accepted God, one also had to accept the tyranny of the

State's absolute power, to accept that the individual had no right vis-a-vis the ruler and the ruler was not responsible to the people, but only to God.

Therefore, people imagined that if they accepted God they would, of necessity, have to accept social repression as well, and if they wanted social freedom they would have to negate God. Hence they preferred social freedom.

However, from the viewpoint of the social philosophy of Islam, the ruler is responsible to the people, and there is not only no necessary implication between faith in God and recognition of despotic rule of persons, but, on the contrary, it is only faith in God which makes the ruler responsible to society, bestows rights upon the individuals, and prescribes restoration of rights as an essential religious obligation.

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a), who was a political and social leader as well as an infallible Imam chosen by God, in a speech delivered during the turmoil of Siffin, states:

> By giving me authority over you, God, the Exalted, has created a right for me over you, and you too have a right over me, similar to my right over you ... A right is always reciprocal: it does not accrue to anyone without accruing against him as well, and it does not accrue against a person unless it accrues in his favour. If there is anyone who has a right without there being a corresponding right over him, that is only God, the Exalted, to the exclusion of His creatures, because of His power over His creatures and His justice which permeates all His decrees.

This implies that rights are reciprocal, and everyone who enjoys a right will have a responsibility in return.

From the Islamic point of view, religious conceptions have always been tantamount to freedom, precisely in opposition to Dr. Sana'i observation concerning what took place in the West, where religious teachings were equated with repression.

Quite clearly, such an approach would have no other consequence except distancing people from religion and driving them towards materialism and opposition to religion, God, or anything having a divine hue.

There are three other causes of the tendency towards materialism which it is necessary to mention. These three causes are common both among us as well as the Christians. All these three causes relate to the method of preaching or practice which the adherents of religions have been following in the past or do so at present.

Non-Specialist Opinions:

There are certain issues regarding which people give themselves the right to express their opinion. This was so in the past concerning health issues. If someone spoke about some complaint he suffered from, every listener would express his opinion about its cause, symptoms, and remedy. Everyone believed in his prerogative to express his opinion, and, at times, if he had the influence or power, or at least the patient was shy of resisting his suggestions, they would force him to apply the prescription whose efficacy was a total certainty. It was unheard of for anyone to think that dealing with health problems required specialized training, that one had to be a physician, a pharmacologist, with the necessary years of study under a teacher as well as sufficient experience. But it was as if everybody considered himself a doctor. Even today the same notion prevails among one group of people.

Precisely the same was true of religious topics, and it continues to remain so, with everybody giving himself the right to advance his opinion. Religious topics, especially those relating to theology and Divine Unity, are among the most complicated of scientific issues, on which everyone does not have the ability to express an opinion. Although the fundamentals of theology—to the extent that people in general are required to know and believe in—are both simple and innate (fitra), but when one takes a step further the issues involving God's Attributes, Names, Acts, and those relating to qada and qadar come to the fore and the problems become extraordinarily complicated. In the words of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a): 'It is a deep ocean,' whose depths can be fathomed only by whales. The identification and study of Divine Attributes and Names is not something which lies within the power of everyone; yet we see that everyone considers himself a specialist in this field and does not hesitate to argue, express his viewpoint, and advance a proof, at times making ridiculous statements.

It is said that once a priest wished to illustrate the principle of teleology, to explain that the order of the universe was purposive and that the universe is moving along a purposive course. Thereby he wished to prove that the Creator possesses wisdom, knowledge, and will. Although, as we know, that is not a difficult task and the creation of any existent can be cited as evidence, the priest chose the lines on the muskmelon to illustrate his point. The reason behind its orderly lines, he said, was that when we want to divide the muskmelon among the members of one's family, the lines were for the knife to cut equal slices so that children did not fight amongst themselves and create a confusion!

Now an example from our society. They say that someone posed the question as to why God had given wings to the pigeon and not to the camel. The reply he suggested was: Were the camel to have wings, life would have been a nightmare, as the camel would fly and wreck our homes of mud and clay.

Another one was asked about the evidence for God's existence. He replied: "Unless there were an atom of truth in a matter, people wouldn't make a mountain out of it."

One of the major causes of irreligion and the inclination towards materialism are the weak reasons often advanced by unqualified people concerning issues pertaining to Divine wisdom, will, and omnipotence, Divine justice, Divine dispositions (qada' wa qadar), freewill and determinism, the world's preeternity or its having come into existence (huduth wa qidam), life after death, the Purgatory (barzakh), Resurrection '(ma'ad), heaven and hell, the Sirat and the Balance, and so on, which often makes the listeners mistakenly imagine that what some of these ignorant persons say are the teachings of religion and that they speak from an in-depth knowledge of these teachings.

It is a great calamity for scholars, especially in Shi'i circles, when persons who neither have an understanding of the theist thought nor that of the materialists, taking advantage the confusion and disorganization prevailing in the system of religious preaching, write books weaving together a mass of absurdities to refute the materialist viewpoint, becoming a laughing stock. It is obvious that such preaching is to the benefit of materialism, and the numerous books of this kind written in our own time can serve as an example.

God or Life?

Initially, it is necessary to take note of a certain point in order to make clear what we intend to discuss.

Man is compelled to obey his instinctive urges. He is endowed with certain instincts which urge him towards a goal envisaged in his creation. This does not mean that he should follow his instincts blindly; rather, what is meant is that the existence of these instincts is not purposeless, and that they may not be ignored. Neither they may be neglected, nor they are to be totally opposed. The instincts are be refined, moderated, and guided, and this is a separate issue.

For example, man has an urge to have children. This urge is not a petty thing, and is a masterpiece of Divine creation. Were it not for this urge, creation would not have continued However, in the scheme of creation this urge has been placed in every animal as something attractive and sweet, so that each generation is employed in the service of the succeeding generation, while also enjoying this service. This attachment has not been placed just in the preceding generation. In human beings every succeeding generation has been made to feel attachment towards the preceding generation, though not with the intensity of the preceding generation's attachment to it. These attachments are the secret of relationships.

Another instinctive urge in man is his curiosity, his desire to seek the truth and acquire knowledge. It is possible to hinder people temporarily from research, quest, and the pursuit of knowledge, but it is not possible to permanently impede the truth-seeking human spirit and its quest for knowledge.

Among human instincts is the love of wealth. Of course, the love of wealth is not a primary instinct in man; that is, it is not that man loves wealth for its own sake. Rather, since it is in his nature and instinct to seek satisfaction of corporal needs of life, and since the means of satisfying these wants are money and wealth in certain societies, such as ours, he loves wealth as the key to all his material needs. One who possesses money seems to have all the keys, while the one without it finds all doors closed upon him.

As we have already said, it is not possible to oppose a natural and instinctive urge by permanently neglecting it, though it is possible for a short period to draw society in that direction, or to draw a limited number of people permanently towards it. But man and human society cannot be stopped forever from responding to the demands of any one of these instincts.

For example, it is not possible to convince everyone to forego everything and to forswear the mysterious magic of the key called 'money' and 'wealth' as something filthy and detestable.

Now if these instincts are repressed in the name of God or religion, and celibacy and monasticism are considered holy in the name of faith, and marriage a defilement; if ignorance be considered as being conducive to salvation in the name faith and knowledge as the means of perdition; if in the name of religion wealth, power, and prosperity be considered sources of eternal wretchedness, and poverty, weakness, and deprivation the causes of bliss and happiness; what will be the consequences? Consider a person who on the one hand gravitates towards religion and religious teachings and, on the other, is strongly drawn towards these things. Eventually, he will either opt for one of these two, or he will, like most people, remain entangled in the conflict between these two forces, like some of whom it has been said:

The scripture in one hand, and the wine goblet in the other,

Oft within the lawful, and often out of bounds.

This results in a wavering disposition:

Neither with these, nor with those. (4:143)

In fact such a person becomes a full-fledged psychic case with all its peculiarities and symptoms. The function of religion and its message is not to wipe out the natural urges, but to moderate, refine, and guide them and to bring them under one's control. Since instincts cannot and should not be annihilated, the inevitable outcome, in societies where they are repressed in the name of God, religion, and faith, and where the worship of God is considered as incompatible with life, is the defeat of these sublime ideas and concepts and the prevalence of materialism and other atheistic and anti-religious trends of thought.

Therefore, it must be categorically said that ignorant ascetics in every society—and unfortunately there are many of them in our own midst—are a major cause of the people's inclination towards materialism.

Russell says:

> The teachings of the Church put man in the position of having to choose between two misfortunes: wretchedness in the world and deprivation from its pleasures, or wretchedness in the hereafter and deprivation from its joys …From the viewpoint of the Church one must bear either of these two misfortunes. One must either submit to the world's misery and languish in isolation and wretchedness in return for the pleasures of paradise, or accept deprivation in the next if one wishes to enjoys this life.

The first and foremost objection and criticism against this kind of approach arises from the side of the genuine logic of monotheism and theology. Why should God require that man must compulsorily endure one of the two misfortunes? Why should it not be possible to combine both the kinds of happiness? Is God a miser?! Will it diminish the stores of His mercy?! Why shouldn't God desire our happiness in this world as well as in the Hereafter? If there is a God, an infinite omnipotent being, then He must desire our complete happiness and well-being. And if He does desire our complete happiness, it implies that He desires our happiness in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

Bertrand Russell is one of those who are deeply offended by this teaching of the Church, and perhaps this teaching had a major role in the development of his anti-God and anti-religious sentiments.

Those who have preached, and continue to preach, such a notion have imagined that the reason why certain things such as wine, gambling, fornication, injustice and so on have been proscribed in religion is that these things lead to happiness and pleasure, while religion is against happiness and pleasure, and God wants man to go without happiness, bliss, and enjoyment in this world so that he may be happy in the Hereafter! The reality is precisely the opposite.

These prohibitions and restraints are because of the fact that these things result in making life miserable and gloomy. If God has made the drinking of wine unlawful, that does not imply that you will be happy in the world if you drink and that the happiness of this world is incompatible with the happiness of the Hereafter. Rather it means that it has been prohibited as it is the cause of wretchedness in this world as well as the next. All the prohibited things are of this kind, that is, had they not been the cause of wretchedness they would not have been prohibited.

Similar is the case with religious obligations; that is, since religious obligations result in

felicity and are a source of salutary effects in the present life, they have been made obligatory. It is not that they have been made obligatory for partially curtailing the happiness of this world.

The Qur'an expressly proclaims the benefits and advantages of the obligatory duties and the harms and evils of prohibited things. For example, it explains in these verses the vital quality of prayer and fasting and the strength they lend to human character:

> Seek assistance in patience and prayer, and they are indeed difficult save for the humble. (2:45)

It observes concerning fasting:

> O believers, prescribed for you is the fast, as it was prescribed for those that were before you, that you may be Godwary. (2:183)

This implies that one should pray and fast so that one's spirit is strengthened and so that one is purged of bad qualities. Prayer and fasting are a kind of exercise and training which restrain one from perpetrating evil and abominable acts.

These teachings not only do not consider worldly and spiritual matters as contradictory, but, on the contrary, spiritual matters are presented as a means of attaining harmony with an environment conducive to a happy life.

The false teachings of some preachers caused people to flee from religion and led them to imagine that belief in God necessarily involves the acceptance of poverty and enduring hardship and disgrace in this world.

An Unfavourable Moral and Social Environment:

Another cause of the growth of the materialist tendency is the disharmony between a person's inner spiritual and moral ethos and the thoughts relating to faith in God and His worship. Faith in God and devotion to Him naturally require a special kind of sublimity in the spirit. It is a seed which grows in a wholesome soil and is ruined in polluted and saltish soils. If man falls victim to the pursuit of corporal appetites, becoming materialistic and a prisoner of his base desires, gradually his thoughts begin to conform with his spiritual and moral ethos, in accordance with the principle of conformity with environment. The sublime thoughts relating to faith, worship, and the love of God give way to degenerate materialistic ideas and to nihilism and a sense of the futility of life, and the feeling that there is no moral principle governing the world and that all that matters is transitory pleasures of the moment, and the like.

Every thought requires a conducive spiritual climate for its survival and growth, and how well this has been alluded to in religious traditions where it is observed that:

Angels do not enter a house where there is a dog or a canine form.

This was in relation to one's inner spiritual environs. Here a question may be asked: What about one's social environment? The answer is that we have mentioned the proximate cause, and there is no doubt that the social environment also needs to be favourable. But the impact of the social environment is not direct on one's beliefs. A corrupt social environment initially spoils one's spiritual ethos, and a corrupt spiritual state weakens the basis for the growth of sublime thoughts and strengthens the basis for the growth of base ideas. This is why great attention has been paid in Islam to the reform of social environment, and it is again for the same reason that the forces pursuing the policy of eradicating higher thoughts from the people's minds prepare the ground for moral and behavioural corruption, and for doing so corrupt the social environment with the means at their disposal.

In order to elucidate the effects of an unfavourable spiritual environment upon materialist leanings, there is no alternative to explaining what we have alluded to earlier.

Earlier we said that materialism is, at times, doctrinal, and at others, moral. Moral materialism means that although a person may doctrinally believe in the supranatural, he is a materialist morally and behaviourally. Moral materialism, as mentioned earlier, is one of the causes of doctrinal materialism. In other words, an unrestrained pursuit of sensual appetites and lusts and wallowing in the quagmire of hedonism are one of the causes of the growth of an intellectual leaning towards materialism.

Moral materialism implies a state in which one's life is devoid of any kind of moral and spiritual ideal.

Is it possible that one should be a theist in respect of belief while his acts do not reflect his faith, being, in practice, a materialist? Further, is it possible that a person be doctrinally a materialist, without being a materialist in practice, i.e. with a life free from and uncorrupted by excesses, transgression, and tyrannical behaviour? Finally, is it possible for moral materialism to exist in isolation from doctrinal materialism? The answer is: Yes, it is possible, and occurs often, though it is not something which may last for long, or which can be counted upon. That is because it is an unnatural condition and that which is against nature and the natural order of cause and effect cannot survive for long. Further, wherever this separation exists, either behaviour influences belief and alters it, or belief and ideals make their impact and alter the mode of behaviour. As a result either faith gives in to behaviour or behaviour

subdues faith.

It is hard to believe that someone can remain a theist all his life doctrinally and intellectually, while being a materialist in practice. Eventually one of the two sides will subdue the other and he will perforce incline towards one of them.

Similarly, a person who is a materialist in mind and belief, will either become a theist, sooner or later, or his moral rectitude will give way to moral materialism. These two types of materialism, doctrinal and moral, are cause and effect of each other and belong to the category of reciprocal causes and effects, that is, each one of them happens to be the cause of the other as well as its effect.

When one's mind arrives at the conclusion that the world is purposeless, that there is no sense, intelligence, and consciousness in it, that mankind are a creature of chance, without purpose, and that one's file is closed forever after death, such a person will naturally start thinking that he should enjoy every moment at his disposal instead of worrying about good and evil and wasting one's life. A nihilistic mode of thought in which existence, life and creation are considered useless, will naturally result in moral materialism, especially because this mode of thought is extraordinarily painful and exhausting. Generally, those who have such ideas become escapists, flying from themselves, trying to run away from their own tormenting thoughts. They are always after something which can keep these noxious thoughts, which torment them like scorpions, at bay. They seek diversions, or take refuge in narcotics and intoxicants. At the least, they turn to such parties and gatherings which provide amusements, that they may forget themselves and their thoughts, gradually sinking in moral materialism.

Thus the reason that materialism in belief leads to moral materialism is not solely that the logical basis of a morality based upon chastity and piety is shaken and there remain no grounds for foregoing corporal pleasures. It is not just that sensual appetites do their work in the absence of a spiritual restraint provided by divine thoughts. Rather, there is another reason. Materialist ideas concerning the world, life, and creation cause a person great anguish and pain and create in him a state in which he develops an inclination to escape these thoughts and seek refuge in diversions, which include among other things the quest of pleasures and use of intoxicants and drugs. The repellent impact of these frightful thoughts is not less than the attraction of material pleasures.

The converse of this condition is also possible. In the same manner in which doctrinal materialism leads to moral materialism, moral materialism also eventually leads to doctrinal materialism. That is, in the same way that thought influences moral behaviour, moral behaviour, too, influences thought and belief. The main purpose of raising this issue in our discussion of the causes of materialist tendencies, which has led up to the issue of unfavourable spiritual and moral social environs, lies here.

A question may possibly be raised here: what is the relationship between conduct and thought? Isn't thought separate from action? Isn't it possible that a person might think in a particular manner and his pattern of thinking might persist without his actions and moral conduct conforming to it and that they might take a different direction?

The answer is that faith and belief are not just abstract ideas which occupy a part of the brain, having nothing to do with the other parts of man's being. There are many such ideas which have no connection with human behaviour, such as mathematical knowledge and concepts and information and most of the information relating to nature and geography.

But there are thoughts which, due to their links with one's destiny, dominate one's entire being and establish their sway over everything. When such thoughts appear, they give rise to a chain of other thoughts and alter man's course in life. It is like the story of the little pupil who remained reticent despite being repeatedly told by the teacher to say "A." When he remained tongue-tied after much insistence, the teacher asked him, "What harm would it do you were you to say 'A'?" He replied, "If I say 'A,' the matter won't end there. Then I will have to say 'B,' and then a long chain will follow. If I don't say 'A,' it will be good riddance to the end".

Sa'di says:

The heart said, occult knowledge do I seek,

Teach me some, should it be in your reach.'Alpha,' said I.

'Then what?' it said. 'Nothing!'

Said I, 'A letter is enough, if anyone be there!'

The matter of God is just like the 'alpha' of the child's first lesson, which once said will immediately be followed by a 'beta' and then the rest of the alphabet of the knowledge of the Divine. Man, when he accepts God, will have to accept that God is the knower of all secrets and hidden things, is omnipotent and all-wise, and that there is nothing purposeless in anything that He does. This would imply that man's creation too has a purpose and aim. Inevitably the question will arise: Is man's life limited to this present life, or he has some duties as well? Has the One who created man assigned him any duty to perform, or is it that He has not done so? And if there is some duty, what is it and how is it to be performed?

This is an alpha which does not let one alone unless one surrenders all his life to it. This is the path which the Divine alpha traces out for man.

On this basis, the knowledge of God requires a favourable spiritual and social clime. And in the event the spiritual and social clime is not favourable, the roots of spirituality dry up,

destroyed like a seed which is sown in the soil but does not get the proper environment to grow.

Faith in God demands a ready spiritual ground for its growth. It seeks spiritual edification and the sublimity of the spirit. It seeks to bring the spirit into harmony with the purpose of life and creation. This is the reason why the Noble Qur'an throughout speaks of receptivity, purity, and receptive capability. It says: a guidance for the Godwary; and in order that one who is alive may be warned; 36:70.

On the other hand, moral sins and vices degrade the spirit from its state of sanctity. Consequently, this kind of thought and that kind of conduct are two contradictory forces.

This is not so only with respect to the sacred ideas of religion; rather, all sublime thoughts, whether they belong to religion or not, are of this type. Nobility, courage, and boldness of the spirit do not grow in everyone. The notions of honour, freedom, justice and concern for the welfare of the people do not flourish in all kinds of people. They decline and undergo erosion in a person given to sensual appetites and amusements, while they grow in a selfless person and one who has freed himself from corporal attachments. Therefore, whenever people incline towards sensual lusts, appetites, comforts, and amusements, all these human excellences die and men wallow in the quagmire of moral vices, and that is how societies and individuals degenerate.

A historical example of this is the downfall of Islamic Spain. Despite every effort to wrest it from the Muslims, the Church was unable to do so until it devised a cunning plan and deprived them of their spiritual eminence, making them addicted to wine and sensual pleasures and robbing them of their sense of honour and dignity. Thereby it was able at first to destroy their supremacy and sovereignty and then their religion and beliefs.

The awliya' and saints used to abstain even from many permissible pleasures and were cautious of being captivated by them, because once one gets addicted to pleasures, his soul is deprived of its sublimity, to say nothing of those who get accustomed to sin.

In Islamic texts this idea has been presented in the form of the notion that sin blackens the heart and a blackened heart breeds faithlessness. In other words, black deeds make a black heart and a black heart gives rise to mental darkness.

> Then the end of those who committed vices was that they repudiated the signs of God .... (30:10)

Bastion of Heroism and Dissent:

The causes and factors dealt with earlier, under such titles as, 'inadequacies in the religious

ideas of the Church,' 'the inadequacy of the philosophical concepts,' 'the inadequacy of the social-and political ideas,' defective methods of religious preaching, and 'unfavourable moral and social environment,' are either related to past history and do not play any role in the materialist tendencies of our times, or are causes which are common to all ages and are not exclusive to our own.

Now we would like to study the peculiar materialist tendencies of our own times. In our age materialism has more or less an attraction, though this attraction is not of the kind it possessed two centuries ago from the point of view of Enlightenment and its links with the growth of science. In the 18th and 19th centuries, due to inadequacies in the religious ideas of the Church and the philosophical concepts, there arose a wave based on the idea that one had to choose between science and knowledge on the one hand and God and religion on the other. But it did not take long for this false wave to subside, and it became clear how baseless it was.

The attraction of materialism in our age is from another angle, from the angle of its revolutionary character and its quality of political dissent and confrontation, for which it has become well-known.

Today, to a certain extent, this idea has gone into the minds of the youth that one must either be a believer in God, and therefore a pacifist and an indifferent quietist, or a materialist, and, consequently, an activist, a nonconformist and an enemy of imperialism, exploitation, and despotism.

Why is it that such an idea has found its way into the minds of the youth? Why is materialism identified with these characteristics, and the Divine school of thought with those? What is it that leads to infer these qualities from materialism and those from theist thought?

The reply to these questions is clear. It is not at all necessary that this be logically deducible from materialism and its opposite from the school of Divine thought, because the youth are not bothered about formal logical inference. A youth sees something and that is sufficient for him to arrive at a conclusion. The young people see that uprisings, revolutions, struggle and confrontations are staged by materialists, while believers are generally found in the camp of the inactive and the indifferent. For a youth this is sufficient for pronouncing a negative judgement on the school of Divine thought, and a favourable judgement about materialism.

Presently the majority of struggles against despotism and exploitation are being staged under the leadership of individuals more or less inclined towards materialism. There is no doubt that the bastion of heroism is to a large extent in their occupation. Activism and revolution have been relatively monopolized by them. We must accept that religious ideas in our times are devoid of any kind of heroism. On the other hand, taking into consideration the reaction which injustice and oppression produce on the minds of the dispossessed and oppressed, and

in view of the spirit of hero-worship which is present in all people, it is sufficient that the positive value of this work be credited to the account of materialism, while the negative value of the practical approach which the believers have adopted these days be put to the account of God and religion.

This situation appears strange, because, in principle, it should have been the opposite. It is faith in God and His worship which link man to objectives transcending material things and endow him with the spirit of sacrifice on the path of these objectives, contrary to materialism which naturally links man to matter and material things and personal life as an individual, and that too a life lived within the narrow confines of corporal existence.

Moreover, history shows that it were always the prophets and their followers who revolted against the tyrants, pharaohs and nimrods, and shattered the forces of evil. It were the prophets who, with the power of faith, mobilized the dispossessed and oppressed masses into a great force against the mala' (the corrupt elite) and the mutrifin (the affluent class). The Noble Qur'an, in the Surat al-Qasas, states

> And We desire to be gracious to those that were weakened in the earth, that We may make them leaders, and that We make them the inheritors, and that We may establish them in the earth, and that We may show Pharaoh and Haman, and their hosts, what they used to dread from them. (28:5-6)

At another place it says:

> How many a prophet there has been, alongside of whom many godly men have fought, and they slackened not neither weakened for what smote them in God's way, nor did they abase themselves; and God loves the patient. And what they said was nothing but, 'Lord, forgive us our sins, and our excesses in our affair, and make firm our feet, and help us against the faithless folk. And God give them the reward of this world and the fairest reward of the Hereafter; and God loves the good-doers. (3:146-8)

In the verses of the Surat al-Qasas it has been said: 'We desire to establish them in the earth.' Now we will mention a Qur'anic verse which highlights the conduct of the followers of the prophets when their power is established in the land. In the Surat al-Haj; it says:

> Those who, when We establish them in the earth, maintain the prayer and pay the alms bid to what s right and forbid what is wrong; and unto God belongs the final issue of affairs. (22:41)

This implies that they always strive to fulfill their duty, and as to its being fruitful or fruitless, that is something which depends upon a set of factors and circumstances which lie in the hands of God.

It is also stated in the same verses ot the Surat al-Qasas that: 'We intend to make them leaders". Now we will mention a verse from the Qur'an which clearly explains what kind of people have the capacity for leadership in the Divine scheme of things. God says in the Surat Alif Lam

Mim Sajdah:

> And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command, whenthey endured patiently, and had convinced faith in Our signs. (32:24)

The Noble Qur'an mentions at another place:

> God has graced with a mighty wage those who struggle over the ones who ones who sit. (4:95)

At another place it says:

> God surely loves those who fight in His way in ranks, as though they were a building well-compacted. (61:4)

At yet another place the Noble Qur'an mirrors their heroic and valiant aspirations in this manners:

> 'Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet, and aid us against the faithless folk!' (2:250)

These are not the only pertinent verses and there are many of them. Can one find a greater and better instance of epical enthusiasm. The Qur'an is replete with references to combat and jihad, to commanding what is right and good and forbidding what is wrong and evil.

Such being the case, how is it that the platform of revolution and confrontation was taken away from the followers of God and how come the materialists occupied it? That which is really surprising is that even the followers of the Qur'an have abandoned this platform. It is not amazing if the Church did so, because for centuries it has been sneering at the Qur'an, Islam, and its Prophet (s) for having violated the codes of monasticism and cloistral seclusion, for rising against tyrants, and revolting against worldly powers, for not leaving to Caesar that which belonged to Caesar and to God what belonged to God

But it is really surprising for those who claim to be followers of the Qur'an. We believe that the abandoning of this platform by the worshippers of God, and similarly its occupation by the followers of materialist thought, have each a separate cause of their own.

This platform was abandoned by the worshippers of God when those who claimed to be religious leaders developed the spirit of seeking a life of ease and comfort. To put it more precisely, this phenomenon occurred when self-seeking people and those who sought the mundane ends of life, or, in the words of the scripture, 'worldly people' occupied the seat of the prophets and genuine religious leaders. The people too mistook them for their representatives and successors, though spirit was totally opposed to that of the prophets, the Imams, and their true disciples, and if there was at all any resemblance, it was confined to appearance and dress.

Obviously these people interpreted, and still interpret, religious teachings in a manner which does not burden them with any duty and does not contradict their easy-going ways in the least. Knowingly or unwittingly they distorted certain religious concepts, employing them against religion itself.

There exists among the Shi'ah a sane and wise concept that is endorsed by the Qur'an as well as reason. This concept is called taqiyyah (dissimulation). Taqiyyah consists of employing sensible tactics in combat for safeguarding one's forces in a better manner. It is obvious that every individual is an element of vital force and his life, economic resources and social status constitute an asset for the battlefront. Utmost effort should be made to safeguard this asset and force. Why should the forces be needlessly wasted? Why should the sources of strength be weakened? The front should remain strong and powerful to the greatest extent possible.

Taqiyyah is like using a shield in battle. This word is from the root waqa, meaning shielding. The duty of a combatant in combat is not just attack to the enemy. Self-protection, to the extent possible, is also his duty. Taqiyyah implies the maximum of striking power with minimum losses. At any rate, taqiyyah is a reasonable and wise tactic in the course of struggle.

But today we see that this word has been totally divested of its real meaning, being imbued in the process with a meaning totally noncombative. From the viewpoint of self-seekers, taqiyyah means abandoning the battlefield, leaving it for the enemy, and devoting oneself to inconsequent debates and pointless polemics.

As to how the materialists came to take over this bastion, it may possibly be said that the reason behind their occupation of this front was its abandonment by the theists. But this observation is not correct. There is another reason for it.

In this regard the Church is more to blame than anyone else. In the West, as mentioned earlier, there were presented certain illogical concepts concerning God, the Hereafter, and Jesus Christ, which were unacceptable to free thinking and enlightened individuals. That which was presented in the name of theology, affiliated to the Church, was of a similar nature.

In addition, there developed, on the one hand, an artificial connection between faith in God and belief in the legitimacy of despotism and repression, and, on the other, between godlessness and the people's right to self-determination and struggle the for civil liberties.

These factors led some social reformers and activists to straight away reject God—and, for that matter, every idea originating from the concept of God—for the sake of freeing themselves totally from these restraints in their social struggles, and turn to materialism.

Their followers, who were fascinated by their social teachings, gradually started thinking that perhaps materialism had a miraculous quality and was capable of giving birth to such combative individuals. But the fact was that these individuals had not acquired this strength from materialism; rather, it was materialism which gained strength from these people and consequently acquired some respectability. The inclination of these individuals towards materialism was not in any way due to its merits; rather, it was result of the evils that afflicted the so-called religious establishment on the intellectual, moral, scientific, and social sides.

Now we see that some short-sighted people fancy that there is some kind of a relation between materialism and socialism, which concerns itself with the economic, social and political conditions of society, while in reality there exists no such relationship. In fact, much of the respectability and credibility of materialism in the present age is due to the pseudo-connection it has developed with socialism.

To be sure we do not intend to exaggerate and claim that at present materialism has been able to capture from the theists all the bastions of revolutionary initiative, reconstruction, and combativeness. Such a general statement especially does not at all hold true of the Islamic world. The history of the last half a century of anti-colonial struggles in the Islamic countries is the best proof of this claim. It is predicted that enlightened Muslims will gradually capture this bastion which rightfully belongs to them. It is even said that, that which is taking place in South-East Asia and has amazed the world, is, contrary to some propaganda, accompanied by a kind of spirituality and anti-materialist dimensions.

But we should neither deny that such has been the case in recent past, and even today atheists are considered the real champions of these platforms.

Conclusion:

What is the practical conclusion that we derived from the study of the causes and factors responsible for materialist tendencies?

I again admit that I do not claim this study to be complete and comprehensive. Certain causes and factors might have remained hidden from me. Also I might have been mistaken in the analysis of some of these factors. Obviously, those who interpret history on the basis of

economics describe these events in a different manner and see the future in another way. Although I do not consider my study sufficient for giving a definitive opinion about the causes and factors responsible for materialist tendencies and consider a more accurate and inclusive analysis as necessary, yet I am not prepared to simply follow others and blindly accept their views.

Let us now see as to what is the remedy and what is to be done from the viewpoint of those who are interested in the spread and propagation of the message of tawhid, in whose opinion mankind's deliverance hangs on knowing and worshipping God, who consider spirituality a human necessity for individual and society, being certain that there is no hope of its survival without spirituality, that it will destroy itself, its civilization, and the planet on which it lives with its own hands.

If we take the study conducted so far as the criterion, it must be said that, firstly, we need to present the Divine teachings in a rational, scientific, and logical manner. We should not offer an anthropomorphic conception of God, neither should we fashion ears and eyes for Him, nor determine the distance between His two eyes. Further we should not look for Him in the laboratory, or above the clouds, or in the depths of the seas. We should follow the approach stressed by the Noble Qur'an on the issue of God's transcendence (tanzih) by considering Him beyond imagination, analogy, conjecture and fancy. We should not conceive Him only as the originator of the universe, nor assign a division of work between God and temporal causes. We should counter irrelevant notions of eternal knowledge and eternal will, and, in short, prevent every kind of intellectual error in issues of theology.

Undoubtedly, this is only possible when we affiliate ourselves to a logical and systematic school of Divine thought capable of fulfilling this need.

Islamic teachings are extraordinary rich from this point of view and can fulfill this requirement very well. Islamic philosophers have been able to create a well-reasoned and powerful school of thought in this sphere under the inspiration of the Noble Qur'an and the traditions of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams ('a). One acquainted with this school of thought will not say that the meaning of the first cause is that a thing brings itself into existence. He would never ask that if all things came into existence due to the first cause, what brought the first cause into existence. He would not say that the difficulty of the first cause is unsolvable, or that if we believe in God we will of necessity have to accept a temporal beginning for time, or that if we affirm God's existence we will have to reject the idea of liberty—'either God or freedom'!—and such things.

In Islamic history, the Ash'arites and the Hanbalis introduced stagnation and literalism, which threatened Islamic theology, but they could not resist the dynamism and sublimity of Islam's profound teachings.

Regrettably a group of so-called intellectuals among Muslim Arab writers have in recent times been propagating a kind of intellectual stagnation and theological agnosticism under the influence of Western empiricism on the one hand and the Ash'arite past on the other. They have been trying to popularize a type of Ash'arite thought mixed with empiricism. Farid Wajdi, and, to some extent, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Qutb and Sayyid Abul al-Hasan Nadwi, belong to this group. To a certain extent this kind of thinking has reached here as well.

On the basis that the realm of the metaphysical is an obscure valley unknown to man and Iying outside the limits of human thought and intelligence, and that we are not required by the Shari'ah to enter this unknown valley, this group completely locks up the door to the higher teachings (ma'arif). They think that the furthest limit of theology is to study the systems of the universe and remain stupefied by a feeling of wonder. Expression of wonder and awe to them is the zenith of theology. Accordingly, a course in natural history is sufficient to resolve all the issues of theology. Books such as that of Maurice Metterling represent a complete theology.

These persons do not know that the study of creation is the first step, not the last. At the most, through it we can reach the border between nature and the supranatural, no further.

In the fifth volume of the 'The Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism,' I have evaluated the different ways to obtaining the knowledge of God, including the way of empirical science, that is, through the study of nature, identifying the limitations of each of them. There we have proved, firstly, the possibility of the knowledge of Divine and metaphysical issues for man as a valid science based on sound rational foundations. Secondly, from the point of view of Islam, man is required, or at least permitted, to acquire the knowledge of metaphysical issues through reasoning and inference, not just believe them on the basis of tradition. Thirdly, the path of empirical knowledge, or the path [to the knowledge of God] through nature, is one which extends from nature to the frontier of the metaphysical, no further. We do not say that it is a path which stretches- from nature to the frontier of the Divine realm, or that it is sufficient, as they say, for 'the journey from the creatures to God' (min al-khalq ila al-Haqq). All that we are saying is that it is a road that leads only up to the frontiers of the metaphysical. That is, it only proves that nature has a metaphysical plane to which it is subject. But whether that metaphysical is itself created or not; that is, whether that metaphysical power is the creator of all things, or itself created and subject to something beyond it; and presuming that there is nothing beyond it, whether it is simple or composite, one or many; are its knowledge and power finite or infinite; is its grace finite or infinite; is man free or not vis-à-vis it—none of these and scores of similar other questions can be answered by it.

But there is a science and discipline which provides replies to all these questions. It enables us through its rational principles to fly from the world of creation (khalq) towards God (Haqq), and take us on 'the journey in the Divine realm in God s company' (bil-Haqq fi al-Haqq),

acquainting us in the process with a set of teachings relating to the Divine realm.

However, one step in the way of countering materialist tendencies is to present a school of Divine thought which is capable of answering the intellectual needs of the thinkers of humanity.

In the second stage, the relationship of the issues of theology (metaphysical issues) with social and political affairs needs to be clearly determined. The place of a school of Divine thought as the supportive basis of political and social rights needs to be clarified. Belief in God should no longer be construed as amounting to the acceptance of tyranny and absolutism of rulers. Fortunately, from this angle, too, the teachings of Islam are rich and clear, although they have rarely been presented. It is the duty of the enlightened Islamic scholars to acquaint the world with the legal framework of Islam from the political and, especially, the economic point of view.

At a later stage, the chaos prevailing in the field of preaching and expression of non-specialist opinions needs to be countered. There should be no philosophizing of the kind that tries to explain the lines on the melon or advantages of the camel's lack of wings. The issue of a favourable moral and social environment harmonious with the sublime spiritual teachings should be given utmost importance.

The issue of a conducive moral and social environment, for which purpose the duty of amr bi al-ma'ruf and nahy 'an al-munkar (commanding the good and forbidding the evil) has been devised in Islam, is, apart from its other aspects, of extraordinary importance for preparing the ground for growth of sublime spiritual values.

More necessary than everything else, for our times, is that those who are aware of the real Islamic teachings and devoted to them should try to regenerate that combative spirit, which is one of the principal Islamic values. Of course, the restoration of the combative spirit to Islamic teaching requires an intellectual jihad, a jihad by pen and tongue—and yet another jihad, in action and deed.

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The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West

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The long history of encounters between Western civilization and Islam has produced a tradition of portraying, in largely negative and self-serving ways, the Islamic religion and Muslim cultures. There is a lot of literature cataloguing (and sometimes correcting) these stereotypes. It is not my intention to rehash this corpus here, though I do rely upon some of the more important works. What I want to do instead is focus on a particular dimension of these encounters, and examine why the West has consistently constructed and perpetuated negative images of Islam and Muslims. My focus will be on the utility of Islamic imagery in Western civilization.

Most people seem to be familiar with stereotypes and negative imagery of Arabs and Muslims-indeed, some are so firmly entrenched that the consumers of these images are unable to distinguish them from reality. At the same time, many people have an idea how these images come about (books, television, speeches). But by looking at the cultural history of Islamic-Western encounters from the perspective of utility, I am able to locate the correlations between imagery and political economy. Western image-makers, including religious authorities, political establishments, and corporate-media conglomerates, conceptualize for their consumers images of Muslims and/or Arabs in sometimes amusing and other tunes cruel or tragic ways. Upon closer examination, these images seem to serve essential purposes throughout the history of Western civilization. At times these purposes are benign, at others quite sinister. Often, there are tragic consequences for Muslims resulting from the socio-political climate fostered by images. Focusing on the dimension of utility can help to reveal some ties between imagery and action.

At the same time, I am aware that focusing solely on imagery misses the important dimensions of intention and power. Though I reserve a careful look at these dimensions for another study, I do recognize the need to consider here some of those people who have the power to provide public conceptualizations of Muslims, such as religious figures, academics, policy pundits, journalists, and entertainment conglomerates. Drawing upon the historical and cultural catalogue of assumptions and perceptions about Islam, these experts and

spokespeople pick and choose the appropriate images to serve their purposes. Many times, they are seemingly unaware of using an image, which is indicative of how deeply entrenched they have become. The stories of those with the power to present need to be told, but they are beyond the scope of this article. Similarly, fruitful research may also reveal the degree to which Muslims contribute to their own images. That, too, I will reserve for another study. The purpose here, then, is to suggest some of the broader utilitarian dimensions of Islamic imagery in the West.

A recurring theme in the present study is the idea of packaging the complexities of Islam and Muslim cultures into easily comprehensible categories-good and bad, beautiful and dangerous, desirable and repulsive-and I look at these in terms of their utility in Western cultural history and political economy. Academic culture is an important site to reveal the utility of imagery, since these are the studies that inform policy makers and politicians; this is also where Western ideas are introduced into native cultures. But it is also necessary to focus on popular culture, especially news and entertainment, because this is where many people in the West get their impressions of Islam and Muslims.

The 'Other' in Western Colonial Discourse:

Images of the Other are prevalent in Western civilization, and have become firmly ensconced in the discourse of colonization and conquest, whoever the victims may be. Some images are rooted in Greek notions of barbarians, others born of the Middle Ages. They have been carried through the Reconquista and Inquisition, picked up during the age of colonial expansion, developed by Orientalists in the 19th and early 20th century, and continue on into the age of mass media and globalized political economy. But images don't exist in a vacuum. They have uses.

For example, in their invasion and colonization of the Americas Europeans brought with them-in addition to muskets and cannons-a great deal of cultural baggage, including rigid and preconceived notions of the Other. These images, intertwined with religious and political conflicts, all found their way into the new world, and eventually entangled Native peoples In fact, historians have shown that American legal traditions regarding Native peoples are based on legal traditions of the Holy Roman Empire which were born of the Crusades against Muslims [1]. For that reason, it will be instructive to spend some time looking at images of Native Americans in the West

The American scholar Berkhofer carefully analyzes the rationale for images of the "Indian " Particularly striking is his observation that there is a dual image, of "good" or "noble" Indians and "bad" or "ignoble" Indians, and how this developed from pre-conception to image to fact He nicely summarizes the elements of the image: [2]

1. generalizing from one tribe's society and culture to all Indians

2. conceiving of Indians in terms of their deficiencies according to White ideals rather than in terms of their own various cultures

3. using moral evaluation as description of Indians

Berkhofer suggests that "since Whites primarily understood the Indian as an antithesis to themselves, then civilization and Indianness as they defined them would forever be opposites " [3] He believes that while some researchers have uncovered one or another element of the Indian image, most have failed to put it all together. Images of Indians are usually treated by scholars in two ways Some have studied "what changed, what persisted, and why," while others studied "what images were held by whom, when, where, and why '[4] Some scholars see them "as a reflection of White cultures and as the primary explanation of White behaviour vis-a-vis Native Americans", while others see them "to be dependent upon the political and economic relationships prevailing in White societies at various times "[5] While each approach is useful in its own way, I agree with Berkhofer's suggestion that any comprehensive understanding of Western images has to consider both aspects, asking not only what the images were and how they continue, but also who holds them and why He combines the two approaches into a useful and broadly applicable methodology for analyzing images and their utility Berkhofer's methodology helps us to ask questions like who benefits from these images, and how are they manipulated and perpetuated? I want to look at European images of Muslims in this framework, and consider in particular the way images change to suit particular historical circumstances

Framing the Ubiquitous Orient

A growing body of critical literature examines the formation, utilization and perpetuation of images in the context of European conceptualization and colonization of the Muslim [6]. Critics generally agree that Orientalist pursuits of knowledge are inextricably tied to colonial and imperial power, and that the West's self-image has been cultivated in a binary relationship with Islamic culture The literature in this area is quite detailed, and there is no need to repeat all of it here What I want to do is first look briefly at some of the factors in the development and maintenance of this binary vision from the Crusades through the modern period, and then apply the same method to more recent examples

According to Norman Daniel, "luxury" and "bellicosity" formed a dual image of Islam in Medieval Western Europe This nexus is intertwined with a second ignorance and malice In considering how the dual image of Islam persists, Daniel suggests that in some cases the reason is ignorance and in others it is malice Ignorance and malice can work together, as in, for example, when a malicious campaign directed by state power toward a scapegoat is explained by using images that rely on the general ignorance of the state's subjects and constituents This is an important factor in the maintenance of imagery, especially in

democratic societies, and I will return to it later.

Edward Said was one of the first to make explicit connections between Western colonization and images of the Muslim world Said shows how the discourse of Orientalism gave itself legitimacy, revealing that what Orientalists were really talking about was creating the levers of power Said's general premise is that knowledge is inextricably tied to power, and that pure scholarship does not exist Drawing upon textual criticism from selected British and French Orientalists of the 19th and 20th centuries, he summarizes the "principle dogmas" of Orientalism

one is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a "classical" Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, vmiform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable, and even scientifically "objective". A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible) [7]

After noting that these dogmas "persist without significant challenge in the academic and governmental study of the modern Near Orient," Said argues that "the Orient" is itself a constituted entity, and that the notion that there are "geographical spaces with indigenous, radically different inhabitants who can be defined on the basis of some religion, culture, or racial essence proper to that geographical space is equally a highly debatable idea." [8] While there are numerous institutions in the West engaging in the study of the Orient, there are few if any in the Orient, and those are invariably run by Westerners (for example, the American Universities of Beirut and Cairo, or the Robert College in Turkey), and consequently, little if any study of the West is done by Orientals.

Building upon the foundation of classical Orientalism, a new breed of Orientalist emerged out of Cold War concerns. Characterized by a fusion of classic Orientalism with post-World War II social science, the new discourse was put at the service of foreign policy makers who emphasized prediction and control. However, with all the new techniques, as Said shows, most have not escaped the 4 dogmas of what we might call the orthodox discourse. Neo-Orientalists replace philology with a more anomalous expertise, which, like philology, is still based on language skills, but is more oriented toward strategic and business interests. This new Orientalism is practiced with an almost mystical authority by experts and Area Studies specialists who have mastered the necessary languages. The usual rationale for continuing Orientalism is that "we" can get to know another people, their way of life, thought, etc. To this end, the new Orientals (many trained at the feet of the orthodox masters) are sometimes

allowed to speak for themselves, but only to a limited degree. The Oriental becomes useful as a direct source of information, but the Orientalist still remains the source of all knowledge.

As a way to avoid reconfiguring Orientalist discourse in new contexts, and to diffuse pre-existing truths, Said recommends some questions to keep in mind when approaching the Other: [9]

1. How does one represent other cultures?
2. What is another culture?
3. Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the "other") ?
4. Do cultural, religious, and racial differences matter more than socio-economic categories, or politico-historical ones?
5. How do ideas acquire authority, "normality," and even the status of "natural" truth?
6. What is the role of the intellectual?
7. Is he there to validate the culture and state of which he is a part?
8. What importance must he give to an independent critical consciousness, an oppositional critical consciousness?

Said concludes with a warning to guard against accepting handed down notions of the other, and incorporating them into one's work without first subjecting them to critical analysis.

Thierry Hentsch incorporates and complicates most earlier studies of Orientalism. [10] He believes that Western images of the Muslim world are projections of Western insecurities about Self onto the Other, and that as long as the Other is a mirror for the Self, there will always be conflict. I think this is becoming evident in the recent usage of images of Muslims and -Islam, built upon not only centuries of images but in particular upon very carefully constructed images of Arabs from the 1960s and 1970s. I will return to this in due time.

To Hentsch, Western images of a sensual yet violent Orient are self-telling myths. Like Bernal, [11] Hentsch believes that racist myths of Western supremacy were fabricated in the 17th and 18th centuries and projected backward to explain contemporary realities. As Said pointed out, collating these myths became the job of the Orientalists. But Hentsch's sweep is

far wider and more inclusive than Said. He considers pre-Orientalist cultural factors, and brings his treatment right up to the 1990-91 Persian Gulf Oil War. Hentsch believes that the West's myth of the Orient will continue to serve its explanatory functions right on into the next century.

Hentsch's essential hypothesis is that the area we call the Middle East (which he defines as the nations from Morocco to Iran; Said's Orient) has been a self-reflecting mirror for Western civilization, in which the West defines itself by constructing an Other who is everything the West is not. Hentsch's thesis is that the "Orient" is an zimmense repository of our own imagined world" and that "we reveal ourselves through our way of seeing." [12] His "capital supposition" is that "any study of the Other is futile unless we first observe ourselves face to face with it, and in particular, unless we attempt to understand how, and why, we have studied and represented this self-same Other down to the present day." [13] Speaking on ethnocentrism, Hentsch asserts that it "is not a flaw to be simply set aside, nor is it a sin to be expunged through repentance. It is the precondition of our vision of the Other. Far from offering us absolution, this precondition compels us constantly to return to our point of departure, if only to grasp the internal and external imperatives which shape our curiosity about the Other." [14] I want to continue with Hentsch's analysis, and look in particular at the genesis and continuation of images as they relate to the emerging European colonizing enterprise.

Races Debased and Unities Sundered:

In November of 1095, Pope Urban II initiated the first European attempt at colonizing the Muslim world-known in the West as the Crusades-by drawing this fateful picture:

For you must hasten to carry aid to your brethren dwelling in the East, who need your help, which they have often asked For the Turks, a Persian people, have attacked them I exhort you with earnest prayer- not I, but God-that, as heralds of Christ, you urge men by frequent exhortation, men of all ranks, knights as well as foot soldiers, rich as well as poor, to hasten to exterminate this vile race from the lands of your brethren Christ commands it And if those who set out thither should lose their lives on the way by land, or in crossing the sea, or in fighting the pagans, their sins shall be remitted Oh what a disgrace, if a race so despised, base, and the instrument of demons, should so overcome a people endowed with faith in the all-powerful God, and resplendent with the name of Christ Let those who have been accustomed to make private war against the faithful carry on to a successful issue a war against the infidels Let those who for a long time have been robbers now become soldiers of Christ Let those who fought against brothers and relatives now fight against these barbarians let them zealously undertake the journey under the guidance of the Lord. [15]

The Pope's words lay out many of the themes that would characterize this mass colonial movement East for the next two centuries In one reading of the Crusading venture, restless

knights and small-tune princes are enticed by their lords with tales of land and wealth, in the hopes of turning their swords away from the increasingly nervous feudal establishment, or what the Pope calls the faithful brethren Landless folks and the poor-euphemized by the Pope as criminals-can also be turned Eastward with enticements of land and Divine forgiveness But what is most interesting here is that the Pope conceptualizes his Oriental Other in racial terms The enemy, for now, is the debased races of Turks and Persians, and Islam is not yet a part of the Western conceptual matrix.

There is also an overlap here with Christian treatment of Jews as the "instruments of demons", one of the key tenets of anti-Semitic white supremacy In Christian Europe, Jews and Muslims suffered the wrath of an increasingly rabid and intolerant resurgent Christianity, culminating in the expulsion of both from Muslim Spain in the 15th century, at the dawn of the expansionist age while this is not the place to trace this legacy in detail, this is also the period in which the religion of rationalism replaced Christianity, with the images of the other traveling full circle from Pope Urban's 11th century "debased races" to the Age of Enlightenment, with its biological explanation for colonization and genocide As Hentsch shows, [16] the uses of Islam continued to change according to European internal and external political and economic situations In the 16th century, when Ottoman Empire was consolidating its control over Mediterranean trade routes, the resulting "rift" was projected back to the first centuries of Islam, making a contemporary economic problem seem to be the result of "age-old" conflict Any rift in the Mediterranean was there long before Muslims came on the scene There was never any trans-Mediterranean unity The Catholic Church, which inherited the decaying Roman Empire, soon split into its Eastern and Western branches Conventional history, such as is found in World Civilization textbooks, overlooks this and continues to frame Muslims for sundering the imaginary unity of European civilization Religious imagery had its uses as well Christian disunity, which began long before Muslims came on the scene, was blamed on Muslim hordes that exploded from Arabia, forever sundering the unity of the Church

When the Ottomans were at the peak of their power in the 17th century, European princes viewed them as a respected and powerful rival However, with the waning of Ottoman power, the Muslim world was seen as a place of exotic trials and espionage This newly exoticized Orient began to be loved for its objects, while its people were despised or belittled By the 19th century, race-based explanations for colonization had fully re-emerged As Hentsch suggests, [17] some Muslims were considered by Europeans to be civilized according to their criteria, but this was explained by the presence of Aryan blood in some Muslim races In fact, as French travelers saw it, the problem with Persians was that, despite their pure Aryan roots, their blood was tainted because of mixing with lesser, darker skinned breeds Before continuing this trend into the modern period, I want to go back over this terrain and look at Christian and European obsessions and insecurities with sex and violence, and the ways they provided particularly fertile ground for images of Muslims.

Medieval Phantasms of Sex and Violence

> And, if you desire to know what was done about the enemy whom we found there, know that in the portico of Solomon and his Temple, our men rode in the blood of the Saracens up to the knees of the horses (Daimbert, Official Summary of the 1st Crusade) [18]

> Those amongst the Saracens are considered most religious who can make the most women pregnant they lie with their concubines and wives often in times of fast, because they suppose making love and desire are so meritorious, either to satisfy lust or to generate many sons to strengthen the defense of their religion. (Bishop Jacques de Vitry on the 5th Crusade) [19]

> Count Roland gripped his sword dripping with gore he strikes his valiant blows, shivering shafts of spears and bucklers, too, cleaving through feet and fists, saddles and sides To see him hack the limbs from Saracens, pile them upon the earth, corpse upon corpse, would call to mind a very valiant knight. (Verse from the Song of Roland, 12th century minstrelsy) [20]

> Nor did Mahomet teach anything of great austerity. . . indeed, he even allowed many pleasurable things, to do with a multitude of women, abuse of them, and suchlike. . . many Christians change and will change to the Saracen religion. (Dominican Friar Humbert of Lyons, c. 1300) [21]

These quotes are instructive in their presentation of Western Christian foundational attitudes toward Islam. In Medieval Europe, the Popes began to use Islam as a proxy to convince backsliding Christians to return to the fold and to convince themselves that Christians were chaste, denouncing Islam as a sexually liberal and even licentious religion. Once the Europeans gained a foothold in West Asia, one of the areas of greatest concern was miscegenation. In the Crusader mind, even sex with one's own wife was a carnal sin; sex with an infidel woman was punished by "castration for the Crusader and facial mutilation for the woman." Muslim women were "viewed as defiled and wanton whores and seductresses." To Christians, Muslim ease with sexuality was seen as "offensively non-ascetic behavior." [22]

In fact, it seems that Medieval Christians could do nothing but condemn the Muslim appreciation of sexuality, and

> . . . therefore they attacked "Islam" as a religion that had been directly set up to encourage promiscuity and lust. . . Biographies of Mohammed by Christians describe the Prophet's sex life in a manner that reveals far more about their own sexual problems than about the facts of the Prophet's life. The Koran was said, quite incorrectly, to condone homosexuality and to encourage unnatural forms

> of intercourse. One scholar claimed that the foulness of lust among Muslims was inexpressible; they were deep in this filth from the soles of their feet to the crown of the head. Soon the Church would accuse any out-group in Christendom of excessive and unnatural sexual practices and twelfth century Christians stigmatized "heresy" of Islam by cursing what they considered its sexual laxity. [23]

To really grasp the utility of this imagery, we need to look at sexuality in European history. In his discussion of human sexuality, Foucault describes Arab-Muslim societies as among those "which have endowed themselves with an ars erotica" in which "truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience." [24] Western civilization, on the other hand, possesses a scientia sexualis, the "procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power strictly opposed to the art of initiations and the masterful secret." In the West, the confession is "one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" and "Western man has become a confessing animal." [25] What needs confessing is the sin of enjoyment.

European discomfort with sexuality in Medieval times gradually gives way to a new outlook, still rooted, as Foucault stresses, in the old insecurities, but now at least with an outward expression of enjoyment. By the twentieth century, the alterity of sexuality has now been reversed, suggests Karen Armstrong, with the post-Christian West seeing itself as sexually liberated vis-a-vis a sexually repressed Islam:

> At a time when many people in the West are liberating themselves from the sexual repressions of their Christian past, Islam is constantly denigrated as a sexually repressive religion. We have completely reversed the old stereotype and not many people seem interested in the truth of the matter or wish to find out about Islam itself. They simply want to bolster their own needs against their long established counter-image: Islam [26]

Sex and violence continue to be juxtaposed in disturbing ways in American culture. For example, American pilots watched porno movies while preparing to carpet bomb Baghdad in the 1991 Persian Gulf Oil war, and they scribbled sexually explicit graffiti on the bombs, labeling them as "Mrs. Saddam's sex toy" or "a suppository for Saddam." [27] George Bush purposefully mispronounced "Saddam" (which in Arabic has a heavy accent on the last syllable) so that it sounded more like Sodom, evoking the Biblical city of wanton sexual depravity, and thus sodomy. A wartime propaganda book produced by an American public relations firm hired by the Kuwaitis was entitled The Rape of Kuwait, adding another facet to the highly sexualized justification for what amounts to a firebomb lynch-party of Iraqis reminiscent of the same charge leveled at African Americans to justify racist brutality. I'll come back to some of these themes in a moment, but I first want to consider further some unique elements of the American conceptualization of the Muslim other.

Orientalizing the American Way:

Most of the literature on Orientalist pursuits focuses on European forms of Orientalism. Comparatively little has been written about the peculiarities of American Orientalism. The latter is worth careful attention, since the United States seems obsessed with becoming the leader in a unipolar world, and some official policy circles list Islam as a "new" but qualified threat to that supposed inevitability.

17th through 19th century American writings illustrates how Europeans who invaded North America believed that they were God's chosen people, that the land they were colonizing was the promised land, and that Native people's were God-less heathen who were to be driven from their homes and burned. [28] Sha'ban points out that religiously driven settlers, Puritans in particular, imagined parallels between themselves and the wandering tribes of Israel. These early roots were bolstered by an emerging and increasingly strong, literal, and exclusive sense of a relationship with their God, who had ordained pre-United States settlers to be "a light in the West" that would shine over the rest of the world. This expansionary, violent, and millennial sense of a divine mission became known as "manifest destiny." [29]

In practice, manifest destiny initially meant bringing the "light" of American style Protestant Christianity to the rest of the world. Americans saw themselves as being placed in the "center of the world" by Providence in order to carry out a Divine mission, as a writer in the American Theological Review put it in 1859:

Indeed, radii drawn from our eastern, western, and southern shores, reach almost all Pagan, Mohammedan, and Papal lands, or rather most of them can be reached by nearly direct water communication. [30]

The American missionary enterprise-the vanguard of manifest destiny- required information on "barbarians," "heathens," "savages," and "pagans," and especially "Mohammedans," "Turks," and "Saracens." Beginning in the early 19th century, particularly when manifest destiny turned cast as well as west, American writers took a strong interest in Islam and the Prophet. In various treatises, they dwell on the Prophet (upon whom be peace) as an impostor and portray Islam as a deviant Christian heresy. Some of the very few instances where this does not apply tend to romanticize the Prophet as a hero, but these views also had at bottom the intention to defeat Islam and convert Muslims to Christianity. An equally important goal of 19th century religious writings on Islam, as Sha'ban notes, was to describe the alleged depravity of Islam in order to assert the imagined purity of Christianity, a tendency inherited from Medieval European Christianity.

Commercial, diplomatic, and military contacts with Mediterranean Muslim lands, coupled with evangelical revivalism in the late 18th and early 19th century, led to a "shift of the

American myth of God's Israel from the New World to the Holy Land." [31] But the imaginary world of Biblical Zion constructed in the parlors and parishes of the United States soon had to be reconciled with the realities on the ground in Palestine. Unfortunately, this reconciliation did not entail rethinking the vision of Zion-it meant imposing that vision on Muslims and non-Protestant Christians who happened to be in the way of the American sense of Providence.

Americans were also motivated in their dealings with Islam and Muslims by a complex amalgam of Oriental fairy tales. Making use of a body of literature largely ignored by other critics of Orientalism, Sha'ban takes a particular interest in Orientalism as found in popular American literature. He notes that one of the most often printed books in the 19th century United States was a translation of the Arabian Nights. That collection of fables and fairy tales, often translated in the West subject to the sexual whims of the translator and marketed to titillate readers, was taken as an accurate portrayal of a timeless, exotic, and mystical East. Tales of harems, genies, and magic carpets found their way into most American homes and libraries. These stories often provided the criteria by which secular travelers to the East would judge their own experiences.

Sha'ban's detailed analysis of travel literature reveals that, time after time, American men traveling to the East were both aroused and repulsed by Muslim culture. One American traveler to Istanbul in 1858 was so mystified and aroused by a veiled Muslim woman that he offered $50 to buy her, but soon realized it was not possible since he "was no Mohammedan." [32] While often envying the Turks for their "harems," some travelers also looked for signs of distress so that they might heroically rescue "oppressed" women from the clutches of the Turkish "barbarians." These expectations were founded upon what Sha'ban calls the "dream of Baghdad", and he aptly demonstrates that such dreams abound in early American Orientalism. This dream of Oriental splendour was picked up by Hollywood in its early years, with Rudolph Valentino epitomizing the Romantic lover in Arab garb. Similar Oriental fantasies permeated American entertainment all through the 20th century, ranging from cartoons like "Popeye meets Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves," to "The Adventures of Sindbad" and "Lawrence of Arabia," and right on up to the 1989 Disney Orientalist extravaganza "Aladdin.'

Corporate American Phantasms:

The dual image of luxury and bellicosity, as suggested by Daniel above, can be illustrated through looking at the incredible popularity of the Arabian Nights-type themes in American corporate culture. Though its use as literature has declined somewhat in recent times, the Arabian Nights, as noted above, was once among the most popular books in America. Hollywood has capitalized on this American obsession with things Oriental in its recent production of "Aladdin," a phantasmagoria of Orientalist cliche, complete with a menagerie of harems, genies, magic carpets, and, of course, murderous barbarians.

A promotional documentary about the making of Aladdin boasts of authenticity in its producers' emulation of "Islamic design" and "Persian architecture," showing scenes of animators carefully drawing images of mosques and calligraphy from photographs; they appear to use great care in detailing their drawings to the minutest degree. But one thing is missing from all this careful attention to detail-people. Characters in Hollywood's Aladdin are compound stereotypes, grossly racist caricatures of the worst Western phantasms-villainous sorcerers in turbans, sensuous harems, sumptuous feasts, hordes of fat ugly thugs with swords (ready to chop off hands for stealing bread), flying carpets, genies. All this is an alterity of the hero, Aladdin, who speaks and acts as if straight out of an American suburban high school. [33]

Sometimes, American media wizards ram together luxurious and bellicose images to create the classic American phantasm. A recent example is the 1995 American football Super Bowl half-time antics, an extended commercial-like foray. First, crooner Tony Bennett sings "Desert Caravan" against a backdrop resembling a mosque. Then Indiana Jones (who shot up many a Muslim barbarian in his Hollywood films) swings into the scene and rescues the football-shaped Super Bowl trophy from hordes of turbaned Muslims with swords (or were they Arabs? or Turks? Moors?). Jones makes short work of these generic barbarians, retrieving the trophy, along with a blonde heroine for good measure. This is followed by a song and dance routine, featuring gyrating women wearing costumes right out of the 1960s American Orientalist situation comedy "I Dream of Jeannie." Other women are draped in black or white chadors; some of these women doff their veils and swing them along with their hips, as if reveling in their new found "liberation." Of course, it is the American hero Jones who has rescued them from their oppressive Muslim masters. The show climaxes with a flashy display of fireworks, and the fans erupt into a jingoistic frenzy, the likes of which rivals similar outbursts when the national anthem is played. Clearly, such Oriental fantasies are part of America's national heritage, which can be utilized by production designers for all sorts of entertainment and commercial purposes.

Commercial television and its corporate advertising conglomerates from time to time intensify their utilization of Islamic exotica in Popular American culture. Interestingly, this often takes place side by side with an increase in the vilification of Muslims and Islam. American corporate news is full of talk about "Islamic terror," "Muslim suicide bombers," "the warriors of Allah," "the holy war of Islam," or "Iranian backed radical extremist Moslem fundamentalist terrorists." Examples abound, including a notorious programme in the Fall of 1994 called "Jihad in America," which described a centrally controlled, top-down international Islamic conspiracy to carry out terror in the US, or the more recent rush to blame the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing on Muslims. These public displays of jingoistic fury have real repercussions on the ground, with a series of mosque- burnings and increased hate and bias crimes against Muslims, including the tragic case of a new mosque in Yuba City, California, burned to the ground by arsonists on the eve of its opening to the community in September 1994. Imagery creates a climate within which such acts seem to make sense.

Images of Muslims seem to ebb and flow with the American political tides, and close examination reveals some connections. Following the violent orgy of death and mayhem popularly known to Americans as "Desert Storm," American corporate television began to feature advertisements with an Arabian Nights motif. For example, a commercial aired on corporate TV throughout 1991 and 1992 for "Near East Rice Pilaf" features scenes in a Middle Eastern bazaar. The ad segues to an American family preparing to gorge themselves on an exotic dish, as if eating Near East Rice Pilaf will somehow transport the consumer into an Eastern fantasy world. IBM computers, as part of its globalized campaign of superficial multicultural inclusion, produced a similar commercial, which utilizes Arabic dialogue and racist caricatures. In an exotic bazaar setting, two natives thoughtfully extol the virtues of the latest American techno-excesses. A similar commercial was produced by Isuzu automobiles, taking place somewhere in North Africa, also with Arabic (as well as French) speaking natives. It begins with a call from a minaret, a pseudo adhan (which has always been an aural symbol for Islam in American film and TV), and ends with the natives being dazzled by expensive leather seats and the corporation's newest mobile contraption. These and other commercials share the common theme of a utilizing a timeless fantasy world that is backwards yet ready for the salvation of American consumer culture. Not intended to sell computers and cars to anyone but Americans, these utilizations of Orientalist imagery serve to make powerful connections for consumers, especially between tradition and progress.

With increasing numbers of American corporations hopping on the Oriental bandwagon, American Muslims have tried to form collective responses. According to a series of press releases beginning in November 1994, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has mounted several campaigns against greeting card corporations for cards that objectify veiled Muslim women in degrading ways, or which feature nude women juxtaposed with verses from the Qur'an. There have been beer commercials featuring actresses with verses of the Qur'an emblazoned across their chests, and the fashion industry has suddenly discovered the beauty of Islamic calligraphy, using it in clothing designs modeled by voluptuous women in public pageants. CAIR has also worked on a number of bias incidents, many involving women barred from working because they choose to wear the Islamic modest dress. It seems that in American corporate culture, veils and other Oriental exotica are widely utilized to titillate buyers, but that real women who wear the Muslim modest dress are despised and rejected. Another phenomenon has also emerged since the Persian Gulf Oil War. There is an increasing number of corporate news media programmes about Muslims living in the US Some no doubt grew out of wartime public relations on behalf of "good Muslims," like the Kuwaiti royals, who hired one of the biggest US public relations firms to manage their wartime propaganda. [34] Most juxtapose two images there is a "terrorist fringe" among US Muslims (the "bad Muslims"), but most other Muslims are peace-loving and eager to be assimilated to the American way of life (the "good Muslims") The American corporate news pundits continually remind consumers that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the US; at the same time, they tell Americans that "Islamic terror cells" are on the rise in the US Muslims in such stories are usually defined by their politics and class While the media assure

Americans that most Muslims are dutiful middle-class citizens, the "terrorist fringe" is always laying at the wait, a threat to the very core of American interests and values Such images have been utilized by politicians and corporate leaders to frighten American citizen-consumers into accepting all sorts of barbarous immigration and security laws.

Closer scrutiny reveals that, in most cases, the Muslims profiled on corporate TV programmes are Palestinians One insidious implication is that Palestinians are somehow inherently irrational, though this is not always made explicit The misogynist character of dominant media imagery of Muslims in the US is underlined, for example, when the corporate news shows images of Palestinian or other Muslim men crying, perhaps after another Israeli raid on their homes Since "real men" don't cry, it becomes hard for Americans to imagine other people's grief expressed in that way, and it is seen instead as an expression of rage or insanity The point is that some images are heightened by the inability of television to portray anything but the most extreme expressions of emotion, causing some to label TV as best suited to portray death. [35] This technical inadequacy is something that even good PR can't fix It also heightens the effectiveness of television as a medium to utilize deep-seated American visions of sex and violence in Islam

US corporate news features often use Islamic religious symbols to frame stories about violent political events For example, a 1994 story about the end of the disastrous American intervention in Somalia begins with the reporter intoning ominously "night falls ul Mogadishu" over the Islamic call to prayer and a backdrop of a mosque silhouetted by a dark, cloudy sky The report segues to picture bites of destroyed American helicopters and corpses of US marines. The call to prayer in this case, as in many others, forebodes death and terror. Furthermore, this is the only Somali voice in the piece.

Some media portrayals of Muslims are reminiscent of the contrived sense of inevitability that Native American scholar Ward Churchill brings out in his comments about the Orientalist extravaganza epic film, Lawrence of Arabia:

Its major impact was to put a 'tragic' but far more humane face upon the nature of Britain's imperial pretensions in the region, making colonization of the Arabs seem more acceptable-or at least more inevitable-than might have otherwise been the case. [36]

The US media often rely on pre-existing images of Muslim barbarity in order to explain the need for intervention or to help the US military save face when things don't come out as planned When the US Marines were escorting members of the UN out of Somalia in February 1995, ABC News televised a report of a multiple amputation, featuring a man who presumably had just been convicted of theft in an Islamic law court The piece was pure emotion and imagery, seeming to say, with Churchill's tragic self- righteousness, "look how easily the natives revert to their barbarity once we leave "

Despite its pervasiveness in the media, imagery that I have described above is far removed from the daily experiences of most American citizen- consumers But lately, some media producers have tried to bring these images closer to home

TV Holy War

In the Fall of 1994, PBS aired a documentary by journalist Steve Emerson Titled "Jihad in America," it followed on the heels of other recent works that put forth the thesis of an elaborate, secret, and centralized network of "Islamic terrorists," who take orders from Iran, and who are mounting a violent war against their hated enemy, the mighty Great Satan. [37]

Evidence within the programme suggests that Emerson has access to official government intelligence Most of the programme either consists of interviews staged by Emerson, or clips from Muslim conferences (which are available publicly from the organizations that sponsor conferences) However, some clips appear to be from other sources, such as home videos confiscated from Muslims in FBI sweeps during the Oil War and in the wake of the World Trade Center incident, or surreptitiously taped surveillance videos Using "former" FBI and State Department officials as informants is only a smoke screen to cover the access Emerson has to official intelligence Concurrent with the debut of his program, Emerson was invited to appear on news and talk shows as an "expert on terrorism " A year or so of this kind of programming set the climate for what became a rush to judge Muslims for crimes they did not commit

Within hours after a truck bomb blew up the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on Wednesday 19 April 1995, word was out that "Islamic extremists" were responsible Talking heads on all the major corporate news outlets made immediate parallels to the World Trade Center bombing, or to the car bombing of the American Marine barracks in Beirut Programmes sporting logos like "Terror in the Heartland" popped up on all the major networks. Speculations ran wild: an international cartel of terrorists were retaliating for the abduction from Pakistan of their leader, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef; fanatical followers of Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman were protesting his trial in New York; Muslim extremists intended to show that even America's heartland was not safe from Mideast terror; religious and political "zealots" from the Middle East were lashing out at the US.

That night, Steve Emerson, along with CBS Mideast expert Fuad Ajami, asserted on a CBS news programme that the bombing had "all the earmarks of Islamic radical extremists," and that Muslim terrorists were now "wreaking havoc in the land they loathe." Former FBI agent and Pan Am flight 203 bombing investigator Oliver "Buck" Revell, who rose to public prominence after appearing in Emerson's anti-Muslim tirade "Jihad in America," was once again wheeled out of obscurity, spewing theories about how vulnerable the US was to attacks by Islamic militants.

It was not only the corporate news media that jumped to such conclusions about Muslims. The same accusations and speculations could be heard from other corners of US officialdom. For example, the director of the House Republican Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, Yossef Bodansky, well known for his conspiracy theories about a centrally controlled Islamic "holy war" against the West, assured viewers that "we have a host of enemies that have vowed to strike at the heart of the Great Satan" and called upon law enforcement agencies to take preventative measures that amount to severe curtailments of civil liberties. [38] The tirades by assorted "terrorism experts" continued into Thursday 20 April, when World Trade Center investigator Michael Cherkasky told CNN that "we've got to know what's going on in these fanatical terrorist groups," and called for beefed up intelligence against immigrants.

Politicians worked quickly to capitalize on the tragedy, quickly realizing its utility for pushing new anti-immigration laws and wiretap legislation. Then Republican Senate Majority Leader, and later Presidential candidate, Bob Dole reminded the President that the Senate was ready to pass a new "counter-terrorism" bill, the Omnibus Counter-terrorism Act of 1995, which had provisions for enabling the use of "secret evidence" to deport immigrants, allowed for the banning of fundraising by "suspected terrorist" organizations, and lessened or eliminated restrictions for conducting phone taps. Similarly, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde emphasized that the US had to identify "potentially dangerous foreigners" and that "we should keep them from getting into the country in the first place," while Florida congresswoman Ileana Ros Lehtinen cried that "the radical Islamic movement has penetrated America and presents a real threat to our national security and serenity." Summing up the general tone of most reporting up to this point, James Wooten, an expert on terrorism at the Congressional Research Service, asserted that "it's no longer to be looked at from afar, it's come home to roost."

As if a vast contingency plan were set in motion, other Federal agencies quickly joined the fray, and there was even talk of possible "retaliation" against. a Middle Eastern state. The Pentagon detailed several Arabic language interpreters to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for possible use in interrogating suspects, and the FBI began to question Arab and Muslim groups in the Oklahoma City area. A Jordanian-American was detained in London and returned to the US for questioning because his luggage contained "possible bombmaking equipment," but which later turned out to be a telephone and other innocuous items. When the man's identity was announced publicly, his property in Oklahoma was vandalized and his wife spat upon. [39]

Though the mainstream media ignored repercussions, the independent Muslim press reported hate crimes related to these incidents. [40] A Muslim woman in Oklahoma city miscarried her late term child when an angry mob besieged her home with bricks and stones. Muslims and Arabs were harassed and many organizations received death and bomb threats and phone calls demanding that they get out of the US. All of this abuse was further exacerbated by

continuing reports, such as one that the Immigration and Naturalization Service was on the lookout for men of "Middle Eastern appearance" and that they had detained several suspicious men of "Middle Eastern origin." [41]

All of this occurred within less than 48 hours after the blast. However, when the composite sketches of "two white males" were released in the late afternoon of 20 April, people began to ask if this reduced the possibility that the bombing was carried out by "Middle Eastern terrorists." News services started mentioning a possible "lone kook" or a "disgruntled employee.' When a suspect with ties to American ultra-nationalists was arrested, attention shifted to the "militia" phenomenon. Although resurgent white supremacy had been seething for years, and despite the warnings of watchdog groups, the mainstream media acted as if the militias had come out of nowhere.

The lesson here is that, while a white American Christian acts alone Muslims always work together. In such a discourse, Muslims are guilty merely by association with the vast menagerie of imagery that government and corporate outlets use to sell products and ideas to Americans. The cruel ironies of American domestic problems began to pile up for Muslims: once it was announced that a man with possible ties to the militias was arrested for the Oklahoma City bombing and emphasis shifted away from "Islamic terror", some branches of the corporate news media insisted on clinging to the hope that there might still be an "Islamic connection," since "our boys" don't do such things; once a white Christian American "good old boy" stood accused of the crime, programmes entitled "Terror in the Heartland" were replaced by those with titles like "Tragedy in Oklahoma;" once it was clear that there were no "Islamic extremists" to blame, the tone of public discourse softened remarkably, with less talk of "retaliation" and more about "forgiveness " Despite the obvious haste with which American officialdom was set to blame Muslims, there were no public apologies to Muslims once it was clear that they could not bc blamed.

The Utility of "Muslim Terror" in Israeli-American Relations:

In the 1970s, Arab American academics like Edmund Ghareeb, Jack Shaheen, and Michael Suleiman made strong connections between stereotypes of Arabs in corporate culture and the issue of Palestine. [42] They concluded that in order for the dispossession of Palestinians to bc supported by ordinary Americans, Arabs had to bc written off as either backward barbarians (who don't understand that colonization is in their best interests) or violent terrorists (who deserve to be eliminated). This was a time when no one used the term "Muslim fundamentalist." Even the Islamic revolution in Iran was seen as some kind of wild and crazy Persian phenomenon.

At the same time, with the gradual acquiescence of Arab regimes to either American or Israeli demands throughout the 1980s and 1990s, there was a shift from "Arab terror" to "Muslim terror." The infrastructure of imagery, already in place from decades of anti-Arab propaganda,

simply had to be transferred to Muslims, the new "enemies of peace." In fact, many of the same political problems still persist, but the "terrorists" are now conceptualized as Muslims, since Arab regimes were now obedient allies. Although the Persian Gulf Oil War was a successful test case for enframing the Muslim world into "good" and "bad" parties, Zionist colonization of Palestine still remains one of the core issues contributing to conflict in West Asia.

American scholar Edward S. Herman believes that anti-Muslim racism in US corporate culture is closely related to the issue of Palestine. He sees an "enormous pro-Israel (and anti-Arab) bias of the mainstream media and intelligentsia," and gives four sources of this bias:

1. Israel's strategic value to the US.
2. the influence of the pro-Israel lobby, AIPAC.
3. Western feelings of guilt toward Jews.
4. anti-Arab racism.

Herman clarifies what he means by anti-Arab racism:

> This racism is mainly an effect and reflection of interest and policy rather than a casual factor. . . Arabs who cooperate with the West. . . are not subject to racist epithets and stereotypes. This suggests that if other Arabs were more tractable and responsive to Western demands they would cease to be negatively stereotyped. Scapegoating is a function of power and interest. [43]

While his remarks on anti-Arab racism illustrate my point about the utility of imagery, I want to take another one of Herman's observations-the pervasiveness of the Israeli lobby in framing American policy-and look at the utility of Muslim terror in that context.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) held a conference on the "Middle East Peace Process" in Washington DC on 7 May 1995, which was aired live on CSPAN. The guests of honour included US president Bill Clinton and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. In his speech, Rabin warned that "extremist radical Islamic fundamentalists" are the "enemies of peace" and that "Khomeinism without Khomeini is the greatest danger to stability, tranquillity and peace in the Middle East and the world." The "scourge of Khomeinism" has replaced the "scourge of communism," and even as the Israelis "consolidate peace with Jordan," the forces of "terror" are seeking to "destroy peace between peoples of our area." He called for the "free world," which successfully mobilized itself against communism, to mobilized itself against "Khomeinism." Rabin concluded by stressing that "only a strong Israel can guarantee stability in the Mideast" and that, therefore, US foreign aid "must remain

a key pillar of the peace process." But the aid Rabin demands is about more than "peace" and "stability."

Israel cannot survive without continuous transfusions of American dollars, both from US government aid ($4-5 billion in American tax dollars annually), and private contributions, making Israel one of the few states in the world whose economic viability relies almost entirely on foreign donations and charity. (Despite this, it has never been economically viable, with even the World Bank considering Israel to be a weak financial risk.) This is meaningful because recently the US Congress has been threatening to cut foreign aid. While the Cold War provided the impetus for supporting aid for Israel as the "first line of defense" against the "communist threat," it seems that the "Islamic threat" is now being utilized for the same purpose by Israeli politicians and their proxies in the US Congress.

After Rabin concluded his speech, AIPAC president Steve Grossman introduced US president Bill Clinton by emphasizing that Clinton has raised the "strategic partnership between the US and Israel to new levels." Clinton began his speech by emphasizing that the US role in the "peace process" was to "minimize the risks taken for peace." He then noted that Russia's cooperation with Iran was a "prime concern" of the US because Iran is "bent on building nuclear weapons." Clinton ignored another "prime concern" of people living in the region, the long standing Israeli nuclear weapons programme and its cooperation with South Africa in detonating a several nuclear weapons, or its kidnapping and imprisonment of Mordecai Vanunu, an Israeli technician who revealed the existence of the long-denied Israeli nuclear weapons programme to the outside world.

Clintons rationale for preventing Iranian-Russian cooperation was that since Iran has "ample oil reserves" it cannot possibly need nuclear technology for peaceful energy purposes. He warned that while Iran haunts the Mideast," the US will seek to "contain Iran as the principle sponsor of terrorism in the world," reminding his audience that Iran undermines the West and its values." He also thanked the Israelis for "drawing our attention to Iran's history of supporting terrorism." But the utility of this imagery became clearer when Clinton next asked for AIPAC to help out with the floundering American embargo against Iran. American attempts at convincing the Europeans and Japanese to sever their economic ties with Iran have been met with little international support, and he seemed to think the Israelis would have some sway over European politicians.

Clinton stated that US support for Israel was "absolute" and that all forms of current assistance will be continued.-He chastised the US Congress as a bunch of "budget cutting back door isolationists" for daring to suggest that the US discontinue its bloated but politically selective foreign aid programs, emphasizing that the US "did not win the Cold War to blow the peace" on budgetary issues. But the kind of peace that Clinton and his cohorts support is clear from the ensuing promises he made to the AIPAC congregation.

Clinton revealed that the once closed American space launcher vehicle market would now be open to the Israeli arms industry, along with other previously unavailable high-tech US weaponry. He also noted that the US would escalate its pre-positioning of weaponry in Israel, and that it would buy $3 billion worth of Israeli made military products. Since the US already has the largest military-industrial complex in the world, buying weapons from Israel is another thinly disguised form of economic aid.

As with other aid, US taxpayers are slated to foot the bill in the name of "national security." Clinton explained the need for all of this wheeling and dealing about war and weapons of mass destruction as necessary because "Israel is on the front line of the battle for freedom and peace." Again seeming to assume that they held some sway over public opinion, this time domestically, Clinton suggested that AIPAC help to "lobby" the American people about budgetary matters.

Israel needs more than military aid. Clinton also assured his audience that the US will continue to support-loan guarantees for the "settlement of 600,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union." This is perhaps the most intractable problem in the Middle East conflict, and one of the main causes of tension, since many Russian emigres are given inducements (and military training) to settle in West Bank areas, in and around Palestinian towns. But in the official conceptualization of this issue, when people who live there resist in any way, they do so because they are inherently "terrorists," not because of any machinations of state power. This contradiction is worth a closer look.

Rabin used the word "terrorist," and its by product "terror," more than "peace" in his speeches like the one at the AIPAC conference. Bernard Nietschmann attempts to provide clarification of the utility of language used to describe conflict and war. [44] He concludes that most wars and conflicts in the world today are of the state-versus-nation variety, and in most cases the state is able to frame the nation they are trying to subdue as "terrorists" or "extremists." Those states, in many cases clients of larger states like the US, are generally supported by the major Western corporate news media. Nietschmann believes that a term like "terrorist" is in most cases a non-word in the struggle for normative issues: the aggressors have always provided the definitions of words used to explain their actions. [45] As we have seen above, words provide the climate for actions.

Especially useful is the assertion that "terrorist" is basically a non- word, because it is always used from a position of power to describe those who struggle against the status quo, or the emerging neo-colonial world order. (One could add to this the term "fundamentalist," which came into vogue after the Islamic Revolution in Iran; similarly, the French use "integriste.") State terminology defines struggles and these terminologies are used to undermine nations that want to have their own vision. More often than not, the nations under state domination are indigenous peoples- Native Americans, Palestinians, South Africans, Australian Aboriginals- who were displaced by European invaders.

Nietschmann reminds his fellow Western political scientists that state systems set up boundaries and that all peoples within those boundaries become subjects. The present historical moment does tell us that states result in hierarchy and violence, that lines on a map make the world, that history has become the history of lines. States define land masses, and most defy logic. The state system serves transnational corporations, which need to bc able to deal with a head man. In addition to facilitating transfer of goods, states also allow use of force within their borders. Usually, the violence is explained as a police action against terrorists, who are portrayed as acting out of some kind of irrational, religious fanaticism. Occasionally, states will even cross borders into another state to attack "terrorists" without actually declaring war on that state, as in repeated Israeli invasions of southern Lebanon, or the recent Turkish incursions into northern Iraq.

There are parallels to this discussion in US history. When Mexicans resisted US expansion in the 19th century, they were called "bandits." Texans had a policy to shoot on sight any bandits, and sometimes marched as far as Mexico City to root out banditry. However, the "war against banditry" was accompanied by a systematic process of enclosure and depopulation, followed by mass ranch ownership. Within 2 years, over a million acres were conquered, while the "bandits" were relegated to the realm of American popular culture. Similar stories could be told about racism toward Native Americans. Returning to Berkhofer's discussion of whites stereotyping Native Americans, he notes that warlike images of Indians prevailed when Indians were a threat to US interests, and that the nostalgic images prevailed when they were seen as a vanishing race. When the US was involved with military action against Haiti around the turn of the century, American newspapers featured stories about stereotypical Haitians, drawing upon a previously constructed repertoire of images and tales of cannibalism and barbarous voodoo rituals.

Nietschmann's distinction between "state" and "nation" is useful, but it suffers from some glaring omissions, particularly in his list of nation/state conflicts. Israeli incursions into Lebanon since the early 1970s are not mentioned, nor is Indian domination over Kashmir. While the Timorese struggle against the Indonesian state is stressed, the struggle of the Achenese is ignored. These Muslim peoples have been struggling against oppression and domination since the 19th century, first against Dutch imperialism and later against its Indonesian surrogate state. Can the Shi'ites of Iraq and Bahrain (where they are oppressed majorities) and in Saudi Arabia (where they are an oppressed minority) be classified as "nations"? Or are religious distinctions not acceptable? There are other shortcomings in this short work on a long topic, but the overall point is instructive.

Conventional American public discourse utilizes images of Islamic resistant movements as intolerant and predisposed toward violence. While many contemporary movements do have a strong anti-Western sentiment, it is often qualified and in any case is a fairly recent phenomenon. If Arabs and Muslims are extremists in anything, I believe that it is in the patience and tolerance they have shown toward persistent Western interventions until very

recently. Islamic movements have much more important characteristics than intolerance and violence. A central concept is social justice. In the West, where it is fashionable to be anti-social under the pretense that socialism is obsolete, it is easy to overlook calls for social justice and fixate instead on violent struggle. But seeing social movements only in terms of violence, real or imagined, is seeing them only in terms that are important to a narrow set of strategic interests.

I became deeply interested in this line of research around the time of the Persian Gulf Oil War in 1990-91. I was amazed at how readily the government and the corporate news media were able to rally public support for that senseless and destructive war. I was sickened by the grotesqueness of the war and the way academic experts and journalists self-righteously mimicked each other's stereotypes and biases in their inhuman depictions of "bad" Arabs and Muslims, while slavishly parroting the official public relations-fueled imagery of the "good" ones. I found it absolutely incredible that the persona of Saddam Hussein could be reworked from loyal proxy, during his murderous war against Iran, to Hitlerian demon after he became too big for his American britches. I thought to myself, Americans must be brain dead if they buy this. Many did. Not content with that as the sole explanation, I set out to see how imagery could be reworked to expedite a shifting political economy. This article is largely about what I found. One of the points I have tried to make is that Western civilization maintains a shifting array of images about Islam and Muslims. These images can be called upon as needed to explain, justify or simplify complex political, social and economic problems, whether they be international or domestic.

Notes:

[1] The best comprehensive discussion on the lineage of Western legal thought from the Crusades through modern legal treatment of Native Americans is Robert A. Williams, The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[2] Robert F. Berkhofer, The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[3] Ibid., 29.

[4] Ibid., 30.

[5] Ibid., 30-31.

[6] For example: Norman Daniel, Islam and the West: The Making of an Image (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961); Hichem Djait, Europe and Islam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Thierry Hentsch, Imagining the Middle East (Montreal: Black Rose,

1992); Edward Said, Orientalism, (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[7] Edward Said, Orientalism, (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[8] Ibid., 301 and 322.

[9] Ibid., 325-326.

[10] Thierry Hentsch, Imagining the Middle East (Montreal: Black Rose, 1992).

[11] Martin Bernal, Black Athena. The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

[12] Hentsch, op. cit., ix.

[13] Ibid., x.

[14] Ibid., xiv, emphasis in the original.

[15] The passage appears in August C. Krey, The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye Witnesses and Participants (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1958).

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., and cf. Marshall Hodgson, Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[18] In Krey, op. cit., 275.

[19] In Norman Daniel, Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the Chansons de Geste (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984).

[20] In D.D.R. Owen, ed., The Song of Roland: The Oxford Text (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972), 75.

[21] In Daniel, 1984, op. cit., 70

[22] These quotes are from David E. Stannard, American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 179. Stannard provides a particularly useful overview of the relationship between sex and violence in Western colonial discourse, especially in the section on "Sex, Race, and Holy War."

[23] Karen Armstrong, Holy War: The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World (NewYork: Anchor, 1992), 230.

[24] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction (New York: Vintage, 1990).

[25] Ibid., 58-59.

[26] Ibid., 230.

[27] In Stannard, op. cit., 253, cf. Douglas Kellner, The Persian Gulf TV War (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992) .

[28] This story, including a case study of Puritan violence toward Indians, is well told by Francis Jennings, The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest (New York: Norton, 1976) .

[29] Fuad Sha'ban, Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought: The Roots of Orientalism in America (Durham, North Carolina: The Acorn Press, 1991), 23-26.

[30] In Ibid., 20.

[31] Ibid., 149.

[32] Ibid., 183.

[33] Henry Giroux provides a useful analysis of Aladdin and other Disney films as they relate to child development in America, in his essay "Are Disney Movies Good for Your Kids?" which can be found in the collection of essays edited by Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kinchloe, Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 53-67.

[34] Kellner, op. cit., 68-70.

[35] For an explication of this thesis, see Joyce Nelson, The Perfect Machine: TV in the Nuclear Age (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1987) .

[36] Ward Churchill, Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1992), 245.

[37] There is a growing genre of conspiracy literature espousing this thesis in the US, which has been recently heightened by an Israeli scholar working on a Congressional task force under

President Bill Clinton, Yossef Bodansky. See in particular his book Target America: Terrorism in the U.S. Today (New York: Shapolsky, 1993). The same book with identical text is marketed outside the US under the title Target the West.

[38] This was reported by Reuters on 20 April 1995. All quotes in this paragraph and the next were taken from this report.

[39] This was reported in a series of news releases by the Associated Press on 20 April 1995.

[40] See, for example, Crescent international 1-15 May 1995.

[41] This was reported by Reuters 20 April 1995; for a fuller account of the media circus, see the July/August 1995 issue of Extra!, the magazine of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.

[42] For a representative sample of this work, see the following: Edmund Ghareeb, ed. Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media (Washington, DC: The American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983); Jack Shaheen, The TV Arab (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984); Michael W. Suleiman, The Arabs in the Mind of America (Brattleboro, Vermont: Amana Books, 1988).

[43] Herman's statements are taken from a piece he wrote in the November 1994 issue of Z Magazine.

[44] Bernard Nietschmann, "The Third World War," Cultural Survival Quarterly 11, no. 3 (1987).

[45] The relationship between language and politics, and especially the struggle over normative issues, is nicely detailed by Franke Wilmer, The Indigenous Voice in World Politics: From Time Immemorial (London: Sage Publications, 1993).

INDEX

A Criticism of the Idea of Arab Nationalism

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> This article was presented as a paper at the World Seminar on "The Impact of Nationalism on the Ummah," London, Dhu al-Qi'dah 13 -- 16, 1100% (July 31 -- August 3, 1985), held by the Muslim Institute. The author is a scholar from Cairo, Egypt.

The Arab nationalist propaganda has been increasingly voiced in recent months from many organs in several Arab countries, particularly Egypt. It was quite evident to observers of the Islamic movement that a re-vitalization of that idea was in order in view of the current hysterical building of defensive strategies in the Arab region against the famous danger of Islamic 'fundamentalism'. It is only appropriate that an idea which originated at the hands of Christian Levantine writers to serve as a weapon of disintegration against the 'Uthmani State, should now be unearthed to be of service once more in the face of rising Islam.

In its latest form, Arab nationalism is put to a different use than its employment by Nasir or the Ba'thists as a means of masking personal or party ambitions. It is presented as a secular political creed that draws upon certain Western concepts as its frame of reference.These concepts (viz. modernity, progress, socialism, besides other minor ones) represent both its slogans of appeal and its intellectual categories of viewing Arab reality.

The leading feature in the renewed nationalist propaganda is the repeated emphasis on the term 'Arab' as opposed to that of ' Islamic'. The indubitable aim of this calculated shift is to substitute the former for the latter term as an inclusive and prime category for analysing and describing political and social facts. The limited 'Arab horizon' is designed to replace, and take precedence over, the Islamic horizon in the thinking and feelings of those toward whom the nationalist propaganda is directed.

The insistence on the category 'Arab' as an alternative for, or at least as a higher, more primary and inclusive mode than the category 'Islamic', gives the entire game away. It is clear

that in the recent presentations of the idea of Arab nationalism, a confrontation with Islam is envisaged, not merely an 'innocent' revival of a century-old view.

Advocates of Arab nationalism do not hide the fact that it is Islam that they counter with their idea.They use that idea as a weapon of attack within a certain anti-Islamic climate that is now prevailing in many Arab countries notwithstanding the fact that its presentations are riddled with logical contradictions, which this paper proposes to expose. It seems that those who recalled the nationalist idea for use against Islam were hard pressed for a tool of intellectual confrontation.

The idea of Arab nationalism suffers from two main contradictions, which make its edifice of slogans shaky and which are reflected in its various presentations. The first is the exclusion of Islam as a defining and constitutive element of that nationalism; and the second, a related one, is the completely Westernized content of an avowedly 'Arab' movement that supposedly wants to revive 'Arab' values and culture.

The First Contradiction:

The Arab nationalist message seems simple and consistent. The Arabs from the Gulf to the Atlantic are one people united by the ties of blood, history, language, and interests. They ought to be united in one political entity which is socially and culturally modern and progressive. This programme can be achieved by the Arab nationalists in the face of various imperialist and ''reactionary' forces of whom the Islamic movement is the most prominent.

Now, the appeal to ties of blood or the argument from ethnography and race has been rather eclipsed by scientific discussions and has largely fallen into disrepute after Hitler. Still it is not quite clear how one can speak of a pure Arab race after the long process of mingling between the original Arabs of the Peninsula and such peoples as the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Berbers, or Negroes. The Arabic phrase 'ties of blood' comes in conveniently to cover the weakness of the nationalist views on this matter by its double reference to both race and kinship. The latter is usually the meaning which is immediately suggested by normal usage and saves the nationalists from getting involved in a losing ethnographic debate.

The invocation of geographic facts is not of much help in advancing the nationalist argument. The Gulf-Atlantic axis is a rather arbitrary projection which overlooks other areas to which the original Arabs ventured. Moreover, it is the 'imperialist' view of the Arab-land which the nationalists now come to adopt, rather uncritically in the light of their high-flown anti-imperialist slogans. The crucial fact in this regard is that it was Islam that created this 'grand Arab homeland', as it is called, and which impelled the original Arabs to conquer that area and much more besides it to spread its teachings.

The Arab nationalists perform a sleight of hand in that they arbitrarily carve out of the grand

Islamic homeland, which was made possible by the Arabs' spread of their own religion, a small area--the 'Arab homeland' -- which is then separated from the larger body and made to stand against or to take priority of allegiance' vis-a-vis it. If we adopt the same secularist stance, for the sake of argument, which the nationalists adhere to, we can say that Islam is an Arabic cultural and social phenomenon which has been propagated by the Arabs throughout a large part of the known world at the time. In this sense, the Muslims of the world can be said to have been 'Arabized' by the mere fact of embracing Islam.

The Arab nationalists play the trick of separating a section of the 'Arabized' (the Muslims) which happens to possess one added feature of 'Arabism', the language, and place it as an independent entity and identity against the rest of Muslims (the 'Arabized' in our sense). It is to be noted that they do not include in their nationalism some Arabic-speaking minorities while they ignore the vital role that Arabic -- with its script -- plays in the languages and culture of the other Muslims.

The nationalists are indicted of contradiction according to their own secular view of Islam as a social growth. For, if it is the 'religion of the Arabs', their prize acquisition as well as the main motive for issuing out of their limited homeland in Arabia, this religion should be the defining feature of Arab nationalism. It is Islam, and not those cultural factors transformed by it beyond recognition, such as language or history, that should be set up as the emblem and sine qua non of Arab nationalism. Yet, the nationalists are out and out secularists who exclude Islam altogether or assign it a servile existence within their creed as a vaguely defined 'spiritual factor', a thing which negates Islam's own claims.

This same criticism applies to the nationalists' call about joint interests -- presumably economic -- as a unifying factor of the 'Arabs' so ambiguously defined. It is to be asked, why shouldn't common interests, of whatever sort, exist among the Muslims, as they have always done? Once again we meet with the same trick. An arbitrary carving out of a certain section within the general Islamic context and its setting up as an independent entity. The keyword here is 'arbitrary', which strips nationalism from any rational claims and exposes its bare ideological bias, which it tries to mask under pretexts of modernity or by appeal to similar specious terms.

The major contradiction in Arab nationalist thinking is seen in its most flagrant form in the adoption of certain cultural elements as language, common history and heritage, and tradition as defining features of that nationalism, while ignoring Islam out of a deep-seated secularist bias.

Before Islam, the Arabs were living in what may be called their pre-history. A warring collection of tribes with various dialects and with none or very little of cultural life, especially on the intellectual plane.Islam introduced such an unimaginable qualitative change into the life of the Arabs that it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that it ' created ' the Arab

identity anew.

The Qurayshi dialect was turned into the richest language in the world and one of the most wide-spread. Islam won for that tongue adherents that came from non-Arab cultures and it was responsible for turning it into a tool of thought and expression in many fields of science and scholarship. It spread it far beyond its original home and speakers.

Similarly, the Arab society was totally transformed in its structures, customs, aims, and outlooks by Islam. This religion is a constitutive principle of Arab social and intellectual life for the past fourteen centuries, and the attempt to posit an 'Arab nationalism' without Islam or in confrontation with it is inconceivable if not utterly absurd. At the same time, an Arab nationalism that tries to take account of Islam will find itself in an impossible position; for the universal claims of Islam and its insistence on full allegiance to its tenets, as well as its priority over other attachments, ensure that it rejects nationalism as a modern form of ancient tribalism or hamiyyat al-jahiliyyah (the fanatical clinging to pre-Islamic loyalties).

The Arabic language and culture have been made by and contained within Islam and not the reverse. Islam has not been a passing and limited stage occurring to an otherwise independent and developed history or tradition of Arab culture and society that had their own line of growth. The same view applies to Arab history, which is Islamic history along with the history of the many peoples that accepted Islam.In fact, Islam is the common denominator that ties the life and history of a great mass of humanity together. As a total religion, Islam has shaped all the aspects of the societies that embraced it and linked them together in a vast entity which often found a political expression in the caliphate system. A non-clerical creed, Islam does not have a separate, isolated history within a church, for instance.

The strategy adopted by the propagandists of Arab nationalism in view of the above state of affairs is as follows: They take certain cultural, social, and historical facts or elements and cite them both as factors of 'Arab nationalism' and as reasons or arguments supporting that idea. They, however, ignore the decisive role played by Islam not only in shaping these elements but in bringing them into existence as well, as with regard to culture and history.

Islam is forgotten and deliberately banished from the consideration of the Arab nationalists. It is excluded according to the principle of secularism, which is, indeed, the real defining feature of that nationalism. Nevertheless, the cultural, social, and historical facts forged by Islam are wrested from it and made to stand as supports and features of an Arab nationalism. Moreover, the same facts that can in all validity and legitimacy be adduced to substantiate the idea of Islamic 'nationalism', unity, or identity are arbitrarily 'stolen' from the Islamic framework and forced to become constituents of a secular idea that sets aside one group of Muslims----the so-called Arabs---and puts them in confrontation with or, at least, in contradiction with the rest of the Muslims who, still, share with this separated group the same cultural, social, and historical unifying elements.

This may well be described as an exercise in deception and it continues the same misleading attitude noticed earlier of artificially defining and extracting an 'Arab' identity from within the Islamic matrix. If a separate Arab identity existed, there would not be any problem. But to take the unification and identification features forged by Islam and designed for all Muslims and then to separate them from Islam, their forming principle, and confine their applicability to an ambiguously and arbitrarily defined group of Muslims -- this can rightly be called intellectual dishonesty.

In their much-vaunted slogans about the unity of culture, heritage, customs, feeling, outlooks, and hopes, the Arab nationalists use fruits from the tree of Islam while disowning the tree. This position, paradoxically enough, is their only logical move. For, to recognize the claims and priority of Islam is to negate their own existence, their own attempt at breaking Muslim ranks and at setting up a higher authority than religion. The Arab nationalists have to deny Islam even at the cost of devastating logical inconsistencies. Accepting Islam demolishes their own raison d detre. Islam would not allow a higher, or even another, locus of allegiance, of authority, or of guidance. It would not tolerate a breach of unity among the believers or a limitation of its universal message and validity. Hence, it rejects nationalism and is in turn rejected by it.

The Second Contradiction:

The term 'Arab nationalism' sets up a certain expectation which is violently contradicted by the content of the idea carrying that name. It should be reasonable to expect that such an idea will seek its content from peculiarly Arab intellectual and cultural premises and fundamentals, whatever those may be. Yet, the plain fact is that apart from some superficial slogans about the glory of the Arabs, etc., the entire content of this idea is of Western origin; i.e. from the same source that is referred to in nationalist rhetoric as the imperialist West.It is not a question of borrowing certain ideas or terms. It is, rather, a matter of wholesale adoption, assimilation, or 'internalization' of attitudes, weltanschauungen, methods of analysis, frames of reference, etc. Arab nationalism is, indeed, a Western phenomenon not just in the familiar sense of being induced by European sources but on the deeper level of being a mere extension of Western concerns and modes of thinking. It should, however, be hastily added that presentations of Arab nationalism rarely, if ever, reach the degree of sophistication that may be suggested here. It remains a crude and immature rehearsal of certain set formulas designed primarily for mass consumption. What is attempted here is to sound the roots and backgrounds of these formulas.

The major Western "import" is the principle of secularism which Arab nationalists go out of their way to emphasize as their defining factor. Secularism is not an Islamic idea and it has not been invariably present in conjunction with nationalist thinking and its practice in Europe itself. One thinks, for instance, of the role played by Protestantism in west European nationalisms or that played by Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbian or Bulgarian ones. The

insistence of Arab nationalists on an indissoluble bond between secularism and nationalism highlights their premeditated intentions against Islam which were examined under our 'First Contradiction' and which betray that movement's nature as a weapon of attack against Islam. Secularism has been deliberately cultivated by Arab nationalists although it does not spring naturally from any ' Arab ' source, except, perhaps, that of the anti-Islamic Arabs of the Prophet's time.

This is not the place to discuss secularism, and it is only the first of a long chain of Western intellectual goods appropriated by the 'purist' Arab nationalists. The most outstanding of these is the idea of nationalism itself, not as the recognition of the existence of tribes or races or peoples, but as a call for the establishment of a secular political entity around a vaguely defined nation, which in the event turns out more often than not to be those people governed by a central authority that sets out to legitimize and mask its authority by fostering the 'national' myth of a historic, glorious past and a unique identity with a future-oriented mission.

Thus, a phenomenon which was deeply embedded in local European religious, cultural, and political conditions and which often came to reinforce certain power interests, is imported by the Arab nationalists, or rather, is purposely exported by the West to the Islamic world, after being abstracted from its distinctive and unique historical matrix and transformed into an abstract, prescriptive programme according to which certain entities are to be created and certain existing power interests are to be encouraged to repeat European experiments and Europe's historical developments. With regard to this last point one thinks of the attribution, after the fact, of nationalist tendencies to some rulers in the Muslim world in the nineteenth century who sought independence from the 'Uthmani State, for example. Mere power-seeking was responsible for such 'famous' nationalist examples as the Muhammad 'Ali rule in Egypt.

The Arab nationalists usually forget that European nationalism which they so readily imitate dealt with individual entities or 'peoples' within the larger European entity. Applied to Arab conditions, this justifies the division of the so-called 'Arab world' into such constituent nationalisms as the Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, Sudanese, etc. This logical 'nationalist' move is, however, bitterly rejected by Arab nationalists, who choose, for no apparent reason, to halt their process of dividing the Muslim world at the 'Arab' frontier rather than carry the nationalist principle to the legitimate level of 'sub-nationalities'. For sure, a true believer in nationalism would wish to see that principle carried to its logical conclusion, and the local peoples of the Middle East region have more unity and common identity factors than can be adduced for the nebulous 'Arab' variety of nationalism -- if we exclude Islam, of course.

The secret behind the arbitrary halting at the Arab level is that the real concern behind this call is not the application of the nationalist principle as such but rather its employment as a tool to hit at the unity of the larger Islamic entity. It is a good tactic to hide the disintegrative aims of that tool by pretending that it is still a unity-seeking idea -- among the 'Arab peoples', that is. Besides, an idea directed originally against the 'Uthmani State will have a better

chance of success if it brought the combined weight, real or imaginary, of the 'Arabs' to bear, rather than an attempt to invoke heterogeneous local nationalisms.It is clear that the Arab nationalists, both old and new, have not even been faithful to the principle of nationalism which they borrowed from Europe to plant in an Islamic environment, which owes allegiance to a more inclusive political expression than that of race or 'nation' defined in vague tribal terms.

Secularism and nationalism represent the outer frame which includes and determines the various other borrowings from the West by the Arab nationalists. Having rejected Islam and having posed themselves as the carriers of a certain cause, they found themselves obliged to fill the vacuum and boost their claims by a programme of action or a `project,' as it is now fashionably called in their circles.Upon inspection this 'project' turns out in its various presentations and developments to be no more than a weaker version of the dominant Western ideologies also removed from their social matrix and imposed as abstract rules of action on the totally different Arab environment.

The strangely protean content of Arab nationalism has passed the entire gamut of Western ideologies from liberal to fascist to socialist to Quasi-Marxist to social-democrat. It has a tendency to be coloured by the ideology of the particular Western power that happens to be dominant in the Middle East at a certain time or that patronizes the Arab nationalist factions. In the light of this view, incidentally, the emergence nowadays of a right-wing, capitalist-oriented, anti-Islamic brand of Arab nationalism based in certain "moderate" regimes can be explained in terms of American influence in the region.

The Western ideologies which came into being in response to certain social, political, and cultural conditions and challenges in Europe were successively adopted by Arab nationalist propagandists and uncritically presented as a 'project' for the renaissance of the 'Arab nation', which, according to their own claims, was passing through a different path of development and has not yet attained to a stage equalling that of the European Renaissance because of the retarding effects of Islam and the 'Uthmani State. Aside from superficial or cosmetic modifications in phrasing and emphasis to suit political conditions and guard against charges of Westernization, the Arab nationalists kept the main body of the ideologies they imported intact. Frequently, two or more incompatible Western doctrines are to be found side by side in ignorant or uneasy contiguity in the thought of Arab nationalists. The socialist and liberal mix that is echoed in the present revival of the idea is a case in view.

Not only were the Western ideologies appropriated in the manner sketched above but their peculiar terms, frames of reference, and methods of examining facts were also whole-heartedly adopted. This attitude is seen most clearly in that Arab nationalists see Islam, for instance, with European eyes. They ignore the immense scholarship on Islam that exists in their own cultural environment and look at their own religion, in name at least, through Western spectacles.

In fact, Islam as well as all the other aspects of Arab reality are defined, examined, reinterpreted, and judged in terms of one Western ideology or another by the Arab nationalists. Favourite ideologies in this regard have been the secular-liberal, a diluted form of Marxism referred to as Arab socialism, and a collection of socio-political ideas of American origin. Thus, Islam is usually seen by Arab nationalist writers as a socio-economic projection from a certain `base', or a flowering of the enlightened emancipatory spirit of the Arab nation, or as a `human revolution' against, the reactionary and exploiting forces of the Quraysh.

The purpose here is not to study what Arab nationalism has adopted from the West. It is rather to expose one of its major contradictions. With its present content, terms, principles, and method of analysis it is neither Arab nor nationalist for that matter. It is, rather, Western and internationalist. Looked at from its intellectual angle it is simply a tool for propagating and universalizing Western ideologies.The terms 'Arab' and 'nationalist' are convenient masks facilitating the acceptance of the surreptitiously smuggled Western contents among the suspicious Muslims.

Arab nationalism is not condemned here for failing to completely adopt the ideas, directions and the general social and cultural heritage of the Arabs (the Muslims). It would have been unreasonable to tax the nationalists for not using the old traditions of the Arabs as their guiding programmes of action just to make themselves deserving of the epithet 'Arab'. Nevertheless, a continuation, revival, and renewal of Arab heritage in all fields of life is certainly the natural attitude to expect from those who base their idea on Arabism and build a huge emotional aura around that term, putting it at the centre of their propaganda.Instead, they have abandoned the Arab heritage altogether and opted for a Westernized content for their idea.

The Arab (Islamic) heritage certainly offers a viable wealth of major values, premises, concepts, ideas, etc. for anyone who wishes to undertake a revival project for the 'Arab nation' even if he has reservations on what, may be called the purely "religious" part of that corpus. Islamic jurisprudence, social and moral values, concepts or principles of government, and practical experience in running a flourishing civilization for many centuries are valid and fruitful bases that can be developed, modified, and enriched even by a secularly-bound Arab nationalism to yield a genuinely Arab project for renaissance and progress.

Yet, that Arab (Islamic) heritage is completely neglected by Arab nationalists, except for being mentioned in propaganda contexts, in favour of the Western doctrines. The only reason that can be advanced for this attitude is the inherent anti-Islamic nature of the idea of Arab nationalism and its being essentially foreign to the Islamic heritage and beliefs of the Arabs. This idea cannot envisage an Arab renaissance from within the Arabs' creed simply because that creed happens to be Islam and because the adherents of nationalism have set themselves from the outset against that religion and aligned themselves with the West.

Consequent Contradictions:

The two major contradictions in the idea of Arab nationalism treated in the previous sections render this doctrine vacuous and, in fact, negate its claims both to Arabism and to nationalism, revealing its nature as an ideological tool for the spread of Western influence and for antagonizing Islam. These two contradictions have been reflected in many of the positions and arguments of Arab nationalism graphically illustrating its inadequacy.

I propose now to deal with several of these consequent inconsistencies beginning with an examination of three positions adopted by Arab nationalists and following that with a refutation of three of their most frequently repeated arguments.

Three Arab Nationalist Positions:

1. The Attitude Towards Independence:

The Arab nationalist writings place a high value on their `independence' slogan. This has been their battle cry against the `Uthmani State and it has been raised against the occupying foreign powers in the Arab countries. It is the main element in their political outlook and a constant part of their propaganda. They even raise it against Islamic trends whom they accuse of hankering after the days of the 'Ottoman Yoke' and of scheming to dissolve the cherished Arab `independence' in a universal Islamic State.

Arab nationalist definitions of independence are negative in that they consider it as freedom from external domination and influences. Independence does not have a positive content in that doctrine and this is understandable in the light of its use as an instrument of attack upon the Islamic caliphate. It is independence from something but for no alternative. It has no justification other than the mere love, it seems, for a sort of vague liberty. It is not impelled by a desire to institute Islam for instance, in place of the departing foreign influence.

Moreover, independence has always been defined in a superficial way by the Arab nationalist'. It was first defined in mere political terms as the evacuation of foreign armies and native rule. Later on, further elements were added such as non-alignment and the highest ceiling that these definitions have reached of late---and only in response to Western debates on the matter---was to make some noises about economic independence. Independence with regard to world-view values, attitudes, ideologies, and frame of reference is hardly, if ever, broached in Arab nationalist circles. These circles that have been created by Western thought even in their way of seeing things cannot be expected to push their cherished slogan to its logical conclusion and to its only meaningful usage.The cause of this muddle is in the "First Contradiction" discussed above. As doctrinaire secularists, the Arab nationalists have rejected Islam as the only possible content of and justification for the call for independence. They had,

or preferred, to fill their ideological vacuum with a Western content, while, at the same time, they had also to maintain the `independence' slogan both as raison d'etre and as an element of appeal. This left them in a position in which they were forced to use only the negative, superficial meaning of the term `independence', and to shun its deeper implications, which raise the spectre of Islam as the only independence-content for the Arabs.

The Arab nationalist position on this issue is reflected in the practice of those who ruled under the banner of this idea, such as Nasir or the Ba'thists. Their fervently advocated slogans did not prevent them from losing their independence to certain Western powers---including the Soviet Union---for which, some would say, they were no more than clients. On another level, the `nationalist' intellectuals, who call themselves 'Arab', are slavishly dependent on the cultural goods of the West -- including the view and prescriptions of the Westerners about the Arab and Muslim conditions. Arab nationalism failed miserably both in theory and practice to live up to an idea which constituted its essence. The rejection of Islam and the adoption of secularism have been responsible for this.

2. The Position on Palestine:

The Arab nationalists have recently coined a phrase which found currency in the Arab media to the effect that Palestine is `the central cause of the Arab people'. Their propaganda pictures them as the only defenders of the Palestinian cause. I do not wish to dwell here on the sad and disastrous record of that 'championship' of their chosen cause.Their intellectual failure implied in this slogan is perhaps more interesting.

The establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine is unanimously explained by Arab nationalists as an imperialist plot against the Arab nation, designed to retard Arab unity and to fritter away Arab resources in the struggle with the `Zionist enemy'. This explanation fails to account for so many aspects of the question that it can only be deemed of mere propaganda value.

The Arab nationalists cannot explain why the attempts at setting up Israel started when Palestine was still a part of the 'Uthmani State. Instead, it is Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid's rebuff of these attempts that can explain the encouragement given to the idea of Arab nationalism by anti-caliphate, foreign powers at the time (the French in Lebanon, for instance). There was no 'Arab nation' at that time to justify the fiendish imperialist plot but there was rather an 'Islamic nation' to be torn to pieces by the colonial and Zionist schemes in which Arab nationalism itself featured prominently. But this view is, of course, uncomfortable to the nationalists.

More importantly, they cannot explain, let alone come to grips with, the religious nature of the Jewish nationalism which has been planted by their secular Western mentors in Palestine. They have been taught by the West that nationalism is built on material and cultural ties that do not include religion. In fact, nationalism replaces religion as a locus of allegiance and has

priority over it in the life of an individual or a nation. This principle was shattered to pieces before the uncomprehending eyes of the Arab nationalists as they confronted the Israeli case. For here material considerations such as unity of race or original homeland did not exist and the Jewish religion is the constitutive element of the Israeli-'nationalism'. Religious observances and symbols play such a vital part in the state's affairs that it is impossible to deny the essential religious character of Israel.

The only response that the Arab nationalists could bring to this situation was to invent a famous dichotomy distinguishing the `Jewish' from the `Zionist'. Judaism, it was maintained, is an innocent religion which the secularist-nationalists respect just like any other creed. Zionism, however, was an imperialist movement within Judaism which should be fought in Palestine as the enemy of the Arab people, The massive support of the Jews all over the world for Israel gave the lie to this Arab nationalist argument and in spite of the waning of the Zionist trend inside Israel as time wore on, the state itself grew stronger. The Zionists were not the only party to share in the setting up and building of Israel. Socialist, communist, and religious parties have enthusiastically joined in this process. The charge of imperialism directed against Israel and its backers rang hollow with the Arabs who saw the Soviet Union and the world communists as well as European leftists, who are the forces of good according to the nationalist propaganda, supporting the new state wholeheartedly, only turning to the Arab side to exploit its defeat in the 1967 war.

The Arab nationalists cannot explain why the imperialists chose to perpetuate their influence in the region through a Jewish state in the religiously significant Palestine rather than through military bases and client rulers or elites. They cannot also explain why Israel was being set up at a time when imperialist powers were already entrenched in the Arab areas that really mattered to them: the Gulf and the Maghrib.Finally, they fail to account for the fact that Israel was, and is, willing to live with all forms of secularist, nationalist regimes in the area but not with an Islamic regime or even a movement.

The establishment of Israel can only be fully understood in the light of designs of the West against the Muslims of the Middle East.The seizure of a land holy to Muslims (Jerusalem, al-Khalil) is an affront to Islam and the setting up of a Jewish entity described as `nationalist' was calculated to serve as a Westernization agent and an encouraging example for the cluster of secular nationalisms that were being fostered around Palestine since the beginnings of the present century. Israel is a phase in the long battle between Islam and Judaism, and if it serves any imperialist purposes it is in the context of the West's attack on Islam and not on an Arab nationalism that did not exist when Israel was first conceived and which itself shares the anti-Islamic nature of the Jewish state.

It is no wonder that the Arab nationalists, who themselves were part of the strategy of confronting Islam, should fail to explain the nature of Israel although it is their chief alleged cause. Both Israel and Arab nationalism have been tools used in the attempt to disintegrate Islam. But the two tools are so different that the theoretical bases of the first demolish those

of the second and the second stands in bewilderment before the first. Ironically enough, it is Islam which is the cause of this paradox. Religion is allowed to be a basis of Jewish nationalism -- indeed its only basis -- but it is unnaturally excluded from Arab nationalism.

The nationalists' confusion in this connection was reflected in the scandalous failures with which they met in their management of the conflict with Israel, although they have been in complete control of the largest and strongest Arab countries. Having excluded the Islamic dimension of this conflict, they found themselves thrown back on appealing to the 'nationalist' sentiments of the Arab masses. But the only sentiments that came out into the open were the 'local' nationalist tendencies, which were not enthusiastic about leaving their own homelands to defend that of the Palestinians. The real sentiments of solidarity that impelled the Arab masses to support the struggle for Palestine were Islamic. The Muslim Brothers, for instance, were the only group in Egypt to fight in Palestine against the Jews, and Islamic motives led the Egyptian people to sympathize with their jihad.

The Arab nationalists refused to draw upon the huge material and moral resources of the Muslim world in their conflict with Israel. This would have led to abandoning their secular principles and would have caused the very disaster their Western backers fear: an Islamic unity and a new caliphate. They also deliberately isolated themselves from the other causes of the Muslim world. Despite their avowed nationalistic and independent tendencies, however, they found it quite acceptable to attach themselves to certain internationalist movements---the communist, for instance -- to seek help in their predicament, rather than go to the Muslim world. The results are all too clear before our eyes at present as the nationalists are dragged in the mud by American diplomacy from which they expect only a humiliating solution for the crisis they brought about.

3. The Position Towards Islam.

Various hints have already been made about the attitude of Arab nationalist writings towards Islam. That religion's claims to full allegiance to it from the Muslims are rejected. All aspects of Islam that contradict the secularist outlook, such as the Shari'ah, the concepts of jihad or the Islamic State, are interpreted away as mere historical growths that were attached to the body of Islam in 'ages of backwardness.' Call for Islamic unity or revival are condemned as dangerous deviations from the nationalist path. Islam itself is subjected to various "interpretations" (i.e., revisions and distortions) to prove that it really approves of and even encourages nationalism. In the process, Islam is turned into what the nationalists call turath (heritage).This turath is viewed by them as a cumbersome corpus of writings, beliefs, attitudes, etc., which has no place in the 'modern world' or in the project of Arab nationalism unless it is 'sifted,' 'purified' and 'reinterpreted' to be ready for use. From what point of view will the turath be sifted, by whom, for what purpose, under what conditions, and what will be left of it, are questions that the nationalists prefer to ignore.

The attitude of Arab nationalism to Islam can be summed up by saying that an intellectual violence is exercised against all aspects of that religion to make it amenable to their secular views of it and to justify its exclusion from the place of prominence in the Arabs' lives in favour of nationalism. Here once more the nationalists fall into contradiction. The natural course would have been for them first to find Islam inadequate or empty of content and then to set about building a social and political creed to replace it, or, at least, to compensate its deficiencies. On the contrary, the strategy of Arab nationalism was to attack the fullness and validity of Islam and to deny or throw doubt on its programmes so that it can justify its own project or doctrine. This is more like putting the cart before the horse; but it seems that sound logic must give way if hitting at Islam is in question.This nationalist attitude towards Islam has revealed itself in yet another contradiction relating to political practice this time. The Arab nationalists show intense jealousy in guarding the 'Arab entity' they carved out of the body of Islam from re-uniting with or reverting once more back to that body. All political movements that call even for lukewarm and formal cooperation between Muslim Nation-States are scoffed at by the Arab nationalists as reactionary steps which would only hinder the crystallization of the desired Arab entity. Even empty organizations run by some Arab regimes in the field of Islamic action are not acceptable to the Arab nationalists.

However, the nationalists do not show any reservations in linking or even incorporating that precious Arab entity into other international entities or movements not only in the political but in the cultural and economic spheres as well. The majority speak, in the current revival of their thought, about a unified front of all the progressive, freedom-loving forces of the world, which primarily include the Soviet Union and its satellites, in addition to the left in Europe and the other continents. Other Arab nationalists speak of close ties between the 'Arab entity' and western Europe as a cultural and political body that balances the two super-powers. Some of these speak more specifically about a 'Mediterranean' entity which fuses the Arabs and the southern Europeans in a primarily cultural-economic system. This last variety is now adopted by wide sections of the Arab nationalists and it is flagrantly anti-Arab in its implications of merging the Arab identity into an essentially Western culture. The Egyptian writer Taha Husayn, who first suggested this idea in radical terms in the late thirties, was bitterly criticized by Muslim thinkers for proposing that servile form of Westernization.

On the political front, the Arab nationalists envisage merging their cherished entity into such world movements as that of the non-aligned, the Third World, and the 'South'. These movements are really Western-defined and inspired despite their high-sounding rhetoric about imperialism, a just economic order, etc.

The argument that I am trying to put across here is that while the Arab nationalists do not find any problem in cooperating with or even merging into internationalist movements of every kind, they completely stand against any form of Islamic action even if it were mere window-dressing that does not bear upon the existing nationalist entities. The reason cannot be that Islamic action relates to a religion while the other world movements are of political or economic nature.The communist or the 'Mediterranean' ideals are redolent of 'belief' and

cultural implications; and Islamic action includes 'worldly' fields in its purview. Once again, Arab nationalism faces us with a contradiction that can only be explained by its anti-Islamic stance.

Three Arguments of Arab Nationalism:

Arab nationalism is not a well-argued or defined doctrine, as has already become clear in the previous sections of the present paper. Its advocates usually have a limited repertoire of arguments that derive their only strength from being tirelessly repeated by their propaganda and uncritically circulated as self-evident truths.These arguments are weak and they reveal the stress of the contradictions we have examined. I now propose to round off this criticism of the idea of Arab nationalism by discussing three of such arguments that are frequently advanced.

1. The Argument of 'National Unity:'

The most powerful argument proudly displayed in the arsenal of Arab nationalists is that their doctrine will solve the problems of the non-Muslim minorities in the Arab countries by abolishing the principle of religious rule by the Muslim majority and substituting it with nationalist rule in which the higher authority will be secular and under which the minorities will regain their 'rights.'

There are no religious minorities in the 'Arab world' except the Copts in Egypt, who have been assimilated into the Muslim majority in all walks of life and who live in harmony with it unless provoked from the outside, and the Christians and some deviant sects in the Levant. The latter have been hostile to Islam for centuries and have cultivated close ties with the imperialist powers and world Christendom in modern times. It is among them that the idea of Arab nationalism emerged to serve as an instrument of attack upon the Caliphate and Islam and to separate the Arab countries from the rule of Islam to be an easy prey for the European imperialists and their clients -- the Westernized elite. It was these early `pioneers', who could not write Arabic proficiently, that called for `Arab' nationalism with their entire inspiration coming from the West and their sentiments drawn to it.

In the light of the confinement of disaffected minorities to a narrow corner of the Arab world, the primacy given to this issue by Arab nationalism raises doubts about this movement. It has very wide claims over all aspects of life and it declares its intention to replace Islam as the guiding `project' of the Arabs. When the major justification given to these bold claims turns out to be the solution of a limited minority's problems that only exist in the minds of some members of those minorities themselves, suspicion is naturally aroused.Religious minorities in the Arab world did not suffer from persecution under Islam or the 'Uthmani State. Barring the usual tensions that may occur, they have attained a secure and advanced status that made them ambitious for more, particularly with the penetration of European influence into the Ottoman-ruled Arab provinces. The Maronites in Lebanon used their links with France to

agitate against the 'Uthmani State calling for an independent Christian-dominated enclave in Lebanon which was actually realized almost a century later under Western auspices. This agitation and similar rebelliousness by other Levantine minorities against a tolerant Islamic rule were primarily motivated by religious sentiments and were coupled with enthusiastic entry into alliances with such colonial powers as the French and the British in the nineteenth century. There was no talk initially about an Arab dimension or 'nationalism' when this minority first began its plotting against the 'Uthmani State.

Into this context the 'Arab' dimension was suddenly introduced to serve both as a cover for these moves towards minority secession with Western backing and as a skilful tool to engage the Arab Muslims in a struggle against Islam and its rule. For, 'Arab' is a critical and sensitive term to use. It has been indissolubly tied to Islam as almost to become synonymous with it. At the same time, it does not clearly indicate Islam and may be filled with non-Islamic, if not anti-Islamic, content, such as the reference to the pre-Islamic age. In this way, it can be used for deception and propaganda purposes with the first meaning displayed and the second implied or intended. This is how it came to serve the conspiring minorities of the Levant and disguise their far from 'nationalist' ties to the West. It dragged with it the idea of nationalism with its secular essence as a further aid in disguise and in luring the unsuspecting Arab away from his Islamic allegiances.

This basically religious agitation against Islam and its rule is exposed fully in the insistence by Arab nationalism on the argument of 'national unity.' It explains to us why a movement that is supposedly secular and engrossed in a wide-ranging 'project' for the renaissance of the Arabs should pay such exaggerated attention to an imaginary problem that does not arise in Islam either theoretically or in practice, and that, if it arose, can easily find a solution within the tolerant and humane precepts of Islam. This argument only reveals that the main concern of the Arab nationalists is to continue that plan of the Levant minorities---independence from Islam and ties with the West---and to place before the other quiescent minorities the prospect of a similar project.

It is ironic that the Arab nationalists, who come to the Muslim majority and ask them to shed their allegiance to Islamic teachings on unity and to Islam's priority and authority over their lives, come also with a call for more commitment by the non-Muslims towards their own creeds. They completely ignore that their alleged championship of the very small minorities comes at the expense of the overwhelming majority of Muslims whom they address. This is because their definition of minority rights has been of the negative type. These rights will be secured only against Islam, when Islamic rule has been abolished, and when the Muslims have been secularized and Westernized. In fact, the last words point to the paradox involved in this Arab nationalist view.The rights of the minorities will be guaranteed and their problems solved only when the majority of Muslim Arabs have become like the Christians of Europe; that is, like the Christian minorities in the Arab world. This can only be described as a form of sectarian blackmail.

The nationalists, who are so enthusiastic for minority rights, do not attempt to search for them in Islam or to work for them, supposing that they have been violated under its rule. They do not even care to define these rights and problems except in the negative sense mentioned above: the rights of the non-Muslims will be guaranteed and their problems solved when Islam itself is liquidated. Thus, Arab nationalism poses itself primarily as the solution of certain undefined problems occurring to some small minorities at the expense of the Muslim majority. Their proposed 'nationalist entity,' which has so far failed to solve the minority problems, as witnessed by the renewed sectarian tensions in some Arab countries, will also create other problems. It will clash with the strongly entrenched local nationalisms in many Arab countries, it will come into conflict with racial and linguistic minorities in these countries, and it will collide with the universally-oriented movements like the Islamic and, to some extent, the communist.The grand scheme of Arab nationalism boils down to a suspicious obsession with a so-called minority problem for the solution of which a host of other problems will be created, foremost amongst which is the obliteration of the identity of the Muslim majority of Arabs. In practice, these problems have actually been created and Arab nationalism has, in that sphere, proved itself a mere tool for achieving the hegemony of religious and political minorities.

In Syria it was the Christians and then the Alawites who used Arab nationalism as a cover ideology to disguise their power-seeking that ended in tragedy for the Muslim majority. In Iraq it is the secularist-Christian minority that rules under the banner of Arab nationalism and leads the Muslim people of their country to attack the Muslims of Iran.In Lebanon the Christians raised the same nationalist slogans only to drop them in recent times and uncover their real designs and alliances with the enemies of Arabs and Muslims alike.

The Arab nationalist argument concerning the minorities, often disguised by the positive-sounding phrase of 'national unity,' betrays much about the backgrounds, intentions, and inconsistencies of this idea.

2. The Argument of 'Modernity:'

There is a constellation of words that are always present in the Arab nationalist propaganda and which are produced as arguments in favour of this idea. These words include 'modernity,' 'progress,' 'the age,' 'reason,' 'enlightenment,' and similar phrases that supposedly support the Arab nationalist doctrine against its Islamic opponents, who are usually described by a counter-group of words like 'reactionary,' 'backward,' etc.

It is obvious that the mere repetition of a handful of favourable terms does not in-itself constitute an argument, but may be of some propaganda value. However, when these words are used in Arab nationalist writings they usually carry a Westernized content of a leftist character. This is another evidence to the essentially dependent nature of a doctrine that brags about being 'Arab' and 'independent.''Modernity,' in nationalist usage, means to establish a

society similar to that of the West, and 'progress' is measured with reference to that model. 'Enlightenment' and 'reason' mean thinking and behaving in the secularist, materialist modes of Europe.

Islamic thought has come in recent years to analyze and criticize the arsenal of favourable terms circulated by the Arab nationalists and, indeed, by all sections of the secularist spectrum. It is usually pointed out that these terms are relative and abstract and must be placed in a certain frame of reference when used. The critics often indicate the confused use by the nationalists of these terms.

However, it can easily be demonstrated that even in the Western context the content of the Arab nationalists' terms cannot be described as modern, progressive, rational, or enlightened. Nationalism of the kind that prevailed in Europe has been superseded by 'the modern age.' An 'enlightened' and 'progressive' socialism or Marxism, from which the Arab nationalists borrow much of their ideas, thinks in global terms and defines man in universal material terms that are basically socio-economic and not racial or even cultural. A new 'nationalism' has been created in the Soviet Union (I am only speaking here about the ideal claims) that cuts across old nationalist lines and unites and merges them on the basis of an internationalist creed.

The 'enlightened' and 'rational' secular ideas or attitudes that the Arab nationalists display are more often than not hackneyed remnants of nineteenth century positivist-materialist thought which are now dead museum pieces. It is certainly not rational or enlightened to present vague emotional formulations mixed with outmoded racist thought as the basis for Arab nationalism. It is equally far from reason to steal the cultural unification factors created by Islam to join all those who believe in it and make them constitutive of an Arab nationalism that ignores Islam or sets itself against it.

The Arab nationalists usually argue that they are working in the spirit of the age to create a larger entity out of local nationalisms in the Middle East area just as is now being attempted in Europe through various 'unions.' This, however, does not hide the fact that their call is essentially disintegrative and not unifying. To unite some local nationalisms, a task in which Arab nationalists have failed miserably, is surely a paltry game compared to the serious cleavage which Arab nationalism has caused in the Muslim world along with non-Arab chauvinism. It should also be mentioned that the claimed unity will be in a secularist, Westernized framework which is a loss to Islam. In fact, Arab nationalism has a chronic tendency to degenerate into local nationalism which in its turn keeps the old Arab slogans to legitimize the local tyrants' claims to leadership outside their own countries.The Arab nationalists ignore the fact that religion -- Judaism and Christianity -- is now a strong unifying force in the West. The rational, enlightened, and modernist Westerners to whom the nationalists owe so much are now flocking back in increasing numbers to their religion which is employed to establish a world-wide identity and entity through the activities of the big churches. The other Westerners are engaged in a similar universal quest through the other Western creeds: liberalism, socialism, and Marxism.

This argument of Arab nationalism turns out to be a mere empty rhetoric that only reveals the depth to which that doctrine is attached to Europe in contradiction to its declared principles, at least from the theoretical point of view.

3. The Argument of 'Practicality':

With the weakness of their ideas being felt more and more, the Arab nationalists have developed this argument in the face of criticisms from Islamic quarters. Islam, which they view in a secular perspective, is seen by them as an unfit alternative for nationalism. Its civilization has failed many centuries ago and its political expression, the caliphate, has gone for ever after displaying its inherent defects.Moreover, according to views propagated by some orientalists, Islam does not really have anything to offer beyond some general moral tenets. The social and political spheres are thus open before an Arab nationalism that offers a practical alternative.

It is tempting to quash this argument by citing the practical record of Arab nationalist forces that have ruled most Arab countries for different periods throughout the last thirty years or more. They have ruled in dictatorial fashion liquidating all other political tendencies and singling out the Islamic for particular harshness to prevent the evolving of a credible Islamic removement and, hence, a viable alternative to their rule. However, their failures in the social, economic, and political fields have been resounding. All of the famous 'socialist experiments' introduced by the Arab nationalist regimes and elites have ended in ruin and their political and military efforts have been unable either to unify the Arabs or face Israel except in one war---that of Ramadan -- which was won in its initial stages only by Islamic fervour and slogans.

Arab nationalist regimes led by military, intellectual, and sectarian elites of a secularist and Westernized bent have practised dictatorship at its worst, strangling all sorts of liberties and human rights. They enforced Western ideas and values on Islamic societies, causing chaos and deterioration in them, Their much-vaunted development schemes were mostly ill-conceived and badly planned as well as incompetently and corruptly managed.

In contrast, one can point to many practical successes of Islamic rule throughout its history though the comparison would be unjust to it because the Arab nationalists have such power in their hands that not even the most despotic Muslim ruler could have dreamt of. It may be more to the point to refer to the contemporary success of Islamic movements on many social and intellectual levels even when they have been subjected to severe persecution and distortion of their ideas and goals. The case of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt as well as that of the Islamic Societies in recent years may be considered in this connection.Arab nationalism is in a worse condition, in the estimation of viability, than what it thinks Islam is in. If we grant that both movements currently exhibit signs of failure or weakness, Islam has at its credit the

fact that it has been forcefully excluded from the sphere of action in its own countries for more than a century now by repeated colonialist and, then, nationalist attacks. Islam is viable as a living creed which shapes the believers' values and view of life and it is not, as Arab nationalism, a travesty of certain nineteenth century European ideas which have outlived their interest there. If both Islam and Arab nationalism are seen, for the sake of argument, to be in an equal state of failure from the political point of view, the decision to opt for one or the other reflects a value judgement. The Muslim can have many arguments to justify his choice of Islam, some of them appealing to Arab heritage. The Arab nationalist, on the other hand, can only argue by reference to Western or non-Arab terms and views to defend his doctrine.

The argument from practicality is reduced, in fact, to the contention by Arab nationalists that since their elites are in possession of power and influence, their idea is more practicable than Islam which has been excluded by them from the spheres of action. It is the old 'status quo' argument that the nationalists must have imported from bourgeois Europe of the last century. In this attitude, they do not only attribute revolutionary (and, hence, 'progressive') tendencies to Islam but also deny their own claims to such tendencies. They consider the wider and deeper Islamic ideas which go beyond race and view man in his entirety as impracticable. They reject the comprehensive Islamic 'project,' whose features they consistently distort by their secularist approaches, and prefer a limited, racially-based, vaguely-defined, and practically disproved idea as a viable alternative to it for no other reason than that they happen to be in power and that they resent an Islamic change. Perhaps the most telling 'practical ' criticism that can be brought at present to bear on Arab nationalism is that its elites have become reliable tools of conservative Arab regimes who shudder at the prospect of an Islamic revolution. At the same time they have become respectable and rich tools of blase, 'radical' regimes similarly apprehensive of an Islamic upheaval.

Conclusion:

The present paper has set itself the rather narrow task of criticizing what it described as logical inconsistencies bedevilling the current, and old, presentations of the idea of Arab nationalism. It suggests that these contradictions which affect the positions and arguments of that idea can be explained by the fact that Arab nationalism has been envisaged from the beginning not as an intellectual creed or a philosophy but rather as a political instrument to achieve certain ends; i.e. the arousal of some eastern Arab provinces against the 'Uthmani State. These ends have later developed to include the secularization and covert Westernization of the Middle Eastern Muslim Arabs, the lifting of non-Muslim or anti-Islamic elites to positions of influence and power, the legitimization of leadership ambitions either by certain dictators or by Arab nationalist parties, and the establishing of an 'Arab entity' separate from the Islamic entity and made to stand against it while using some of the elements it created.

Arab nationalism was primarily conceived for an emotional, demagogic mode of propaganda and dissemination. Hence, the contradictions. The crowds of Arabs, it seems, could

sufficiently be aroused by a jumble of slogans. Arab nationalism, that is, started life with a derogatory view of Arab mentality. There is nothing strange in that, keeping in mind its Western inspiration.

When Arab nationalism began to feel the need for intellectual development it could only magnify the contradictions inherent in it in the way that this paper has traced. With its overwhelming Western content Arab nationalism has, in fact, lost its independence and become a mere branch of some ideologies of the West but without the intellectual sophistications and equipment. As I have earlier emphasized, it has practically ceased to be 'Arab' or 'nationalist' in the strict or usual meaning of these terms and turned, intellectually as well as politically, into a Trojan horse for internationalist forces encroaching upon the Muslim world. It combines with other secularized and Westernized nationalisms fostered in various areas across the Muslim world to yield a pattern of attack upon the unity of that world and its identity.

The various brands of nationalism use the unifying elements created by Islam to forward their own claims of independent and separate entities vis-a-vis Islam. They disintegrate the universal Islamic identity but they do not end up in several entities as might be expected. Rather, they are re-unified again into another global system, that of Western civilization in its widest sense. The nationalisms are claimed as smaller but more valid entities than the larger identity of Islam; but the valid and sure nationalist identities soon reveal their essentially dependent, Westernized nature and merge into the universal Western system in any or all of its political, economic, or cultural manifestations.

The crucial point in this development is the two contradictions that I isolated and attempted to explain. The nationalisms forced upon the Islamic identity represent intermediate stages in the confrontation between Islam and the West. They are secessions from Islam which claim an identity independent of Islam and, apparently, of the West, but their essential and characteristic content is basically and inescapably Western (secularist) in addition to their political orientations.This content and the practice of the ruling nationalist elites leads inevitably to identification with, involvement in, and gradual incorporation into the universal Western 'project' in any of its major branches.The nationalist elites cannot revert to Islam even if they wanted to because they have destroyed its universal system and have interpreted away its fullness and programmes.

Thus, nationalism of any type can be seen, from the strategic point of view, as a mediate phase between the disintegration of a total Islamic polity and identity and the incorporation or assimilation of the resulting nationalistic identities into the global Western polity. This is the logic that is inherent in the content of the idea of nationalism itself as it was, and still is, presented across the Muslim world: a secularist, Westernized content. Nationalism can only lead to Western internationalism and it is in essence a temporary, unstable phase of political development that has been forced on the Muslim countries aimed at throwing them into the lap of the West. No amount of chauvinism or calls for a return to 'original culture' or 'the

roots' can save the nationalisms from that fate, assuming that the nationalist elites so desire to be saved.

The mere idea, terms, mode of seeing things, and outlook of the nationalisms have been Western-oriented and inspired from the start. When they abandoned universal Islamic claims to priority, allegiance, unity, and political and social expression, they had no alternative but to join the other global system that confronts Islam, the West. Nationalist illusions of independence and identity were only preparatory stages in this development. They are good arousal factors against Islam while they hide the Western content of the nationalist doctrine. When the nationalisms have performed the destructive part of their idea, the separation from the Islamic identity, and attempt to embark on some form of building their own 'identity,' they find themselves drawn into the Western vortex. All the secularized nationalisms of the Muslim world, from that of Ataturk to the Arab variety can be explained by and studied according to this formula.

All attempts to solve the desperate problems of the nationalisms --- under such concepts as 'the South' or 'the Third World' ---can only increase the malaise, because they are of Western origin and conception and because they are confined to partial views in the economic field which only help to remove tensions in the global polity dominated by the West.

This paper must stop at these limits but it is important to point out that the current artificial revival of Arab nationalist thought is directed primarily against Islam, either in Iran or inside the Arab countries themselves, and not against imperialism or Zionism. The analysis of this paper should, I hope, shed light on this attitude. Another significant thing is that the framework defined here can also serve to criticize the similarly artificial revival in some Arab countries recently of the doctrinaire secularist tendency, which has been moribund in Egypt, for example, for many years. Secularism uses the same arguments of Arab nationalism and suffers from the same contradictions and even more. It insists that Islam be evacuated from the sphere of social, economic, political, and cultural action and guidance only to replace it with Western views and values, some of them of Judaeo-Christian origins while the rest are atheistic. There is nothing to wonder at in that both the secularists and the Arab nationalists have united against Islam and its active movements.

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Al-Tawhid

Glimpses of the Nahj al-Balaghah

Martyr Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from the Persian by 'Ali Quli Qara'i

This is the translation of sections from Martyr Mutahhari's book Sayri dar Nahj al-balaghah. This book consists of seven sections. In the first section the author discusses the two main characteristics of the Nahj al-balaghah; its literary excellence and its multidimensionality, quoted various opinions expressed about Imam Ali's eloquence in general and about the Nahj al-balaghah in particular. In the second section, the author discusses the theological and metaphysical ideas propounded in the Nahj al-balaghah and compared them with the parallel notions familiar to the Muslim mutakallimun and philosophers. The third section deals with ibadah (worship) and its various levels. The fourth section deals with Islamic Government and Social Justice. The fifth, dealing with the controversial issue of caliphate (khilafah) and the superior status of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), has been deleted in this translation. The sixth and the seventh sections discuss the Nahj al-balaghah's ethical teachings, in particular the Islamic Concept of zuhd (abstinence); the meaning of the world (dunya), so often condemned in the Nahj al-balaghah; and the meaning of the contradiction between the world and the hereafter, which is also recurring theme.

Al-Tawhid

The Glimpses of Nahj al Balaghah

Part I - Introduction

Murtadha Mutahhari

Translated from Persian by Ali Quli Qara'i

This is the first part of Martyr Mutahhari's book Sayri dar Nahj al-balaghah, and consists of the introduction and the first section of the book. The introduction, which the author, presumably wrote before giving the book to the publishers is dated Muharram 3, 1995 (January 15, 1975).

INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps it may have happened to you, and if not, you may still visualize it: someone lives on your street or in your neighbourhood for years; you see him at least once every day and habitually nod to him and pass by. Years pass in this manner, until, one day, accidentally, you get an opportunity to sit down with him and to become familiar with his ideas, views and feelings, his likes and dislikes. You are amazed at what you have come to know about him. You never imagined or guessed that he might be as you found him, and never thought that he was what you later discovered him to be.

After that, whenever you see him, his face, somehow, appears to be different. Not only this, your entire attitude towards him is altered. His personality assumes a new meaning, a new depth and respect in your heart, as if he were some person other than the one you thought you knew for years. You feel as if you have discovered a new world.

My experience was similar in regard to the Nahj al-balaghah. From my childhood years I was familiar with the name of this book, and I could distinguish it from other books on the shelves in my father's library. Years later, during my studies, first at the theological school of Mashhad, and later at Qum, when I was finishing the last stages of the preliminary education in theology called "sutuh", during all those days the name of the Nahj al-balaghah was heard

more often than that of any other book after the Quran. Some of its sermons on piety I had heard so many times that I almost remembered them by heart. Nevertheless, I must admit, like all of my colleagues at the theology school (Hawzah 'ilmiyyah), I was quite ignorant of the world of the Nahj al-balaghah. We had met as strangers and passed by each other in the manner of strangers. This continued until the summer of 1325 (1946) when in order to escape the heat of Qum, I went to Isfahan. A trifling accident brought me into contact with a person who took my hand and led me somewhat into the world of the Nahj al-balaghah.

When this happened, I realized that I knew little about this book until that time. Later I wished that I would also find someone who would introduce me into the world of the Quran. Since then, the countenance of the Nahj al-balaghah was transformed in my eyes. I became fond of it, and gradually my fondness grew into love. It was now a different book from the one I had known until that moment. I felt as if I had discovered an entirely new world. Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, the former mufti of Egypt, who edited and published the Nahj al-balaghah with a brief commentary, and for the first time introduced this book to the Egyptians, says that he had no knowledge of this book until he undertook its study far from home in a distant land.

He was struck with wonder and felt as if he had discovered a precious treasure trove. Thereupon, he immediately decided to publish it and introduce it to the Arab public. The unfamiliarity of a Sunni scholar with the Nahj al-balaghah is not surprising; what is amazing is that the Nahj al-balaghah should be a stranger and alien in its own homeland and among the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a) and that too in the Shi'i theological schools in the same way as 'Ali himself has remained isolated and a stranger. Evidently, if the content and ideas of a book or the feelings and emotions of a person do not harmonize with the mentality of a people, that book or person practically remains isolated as a stranger in an alien world, even though the name of such a person or book may be mentioned with great respect and admiration.

We, the theology students, must confess our estrangement from the Nahj al-balaghah. We have built a mental world of our own which is alien to the world of the Nahj al-balaghah. As I write this preface, I cannot abstain from recalling with sorrow the memory of that great man who introduced me for the first time into the world of the Nahj al-balaghah, and whose acquaintance I treasure as one of the most precious experiences of my life, which I would not exchange for anything. No day or night passes without my remembering him or mentioning him with feelings of gratitude. I dare say that he was a divine scholar ('alim-e rabbani) in the true sense of the word, though I dare not claim that I was "a learner of the path of deliverance" (muta'allim 'ala sabil al-najat). [1] I remember that in my meetings with him, I was always reminded of the following verse of Sa'di:

The devout, the ascetic, and the Subi,

All are toddlers on the path;

If there is any mature man,

It is none other than the 'alim-e rabbani.

He was a faqih (jurisprudent) [2] , a philosopher, a man of letters and a physician, all at once. He was well versed in fiqh (jurisprudence), philosophy, the Arabic and Persian literature and the traditional medicine, and was considered a specialist of the first order in some of these fields. He was a masterly teacher of Bu 'Ali's al-Qanun, the treatise of Ibn Sina in medicine, which does not find a teacher these days, and many scholars of the theology school attended his lessons. However, it was not possible for him to confine himself to one field and his spirit revolted against any kind of restrictions. Of his lectures the most that interested him were those on the Nahj al-balaghah, which threw him into ecstasies. It seemed as if the Nahj al-balaghah had opened its wings and he, having mounted on its wings, was taken on a journey through strange worlds which were beyond our reach.

It was evident that he lived by the Nahj al-balaghah; he lived with it and breathed with it. His spirit was united with that book; his pulse throbbed and his heart beat in harmony with the Nahj al-balaghah. Its sentences were always on his lips and their meanings had been engraved upon his heart. When he quoted its passages, tears would flow from his eyes and soak his white beard. During lessons, his encounter with and involvement in the Nahj al-balaghah would make him totally oblivious of his surroundings. It was a very educative as well as an attractive spectacle. Listening to the language of the heart from someone whose great heart is full of love and wisdom has altogether a different affect and attraction. He was a living example of the saints of the bygone days. The words of 'Ali fully apply to him:

Had it not been that the Providence had decreed the years of their life the passionate earning for Divine reward and fear of chastisement would not have permitted their souls to remain in their bodies even for a moment. Their realization of the greatness of the creator has made everything besides Him insignificant in their eyes. [3]

This refined man of letters, the speculative philosopher, the great faqih, the adept man of medicine and the excellent master of theology was the late Hajj Mirza 'Ali Aqa al-Shirazi al-'Isfahani, sanctified by God, a man of truth and wisdom, who had attained deliverance from the finite self and selfhood and had merged with the Infinite Truth.

In spite of his high scholarly status and eminent social standing, his sense of commitment to society and his burning love for al-Imam al-Husayn ('a) had impelled him to deliver sermons from the minbar.

His sermons, since they came from the heart, had a deep effect on the hearts. Whenever he visited Qum, the scholars of the first rank would persuade him to deliver sermons from the minbar. [4] His sermons were charged with a passionate purity and sincerity that made them

profoundly effective. They were not just words to be heard, but a spiritual state to be experienced.

However, he abstained from leading prayers. One year, during the holy month of Ramadan, after much persuasion, he accepted to lead prayers at the Madraseh-ye Sadr for that month. In spite of the fact that he did not come regularly and refused to stick to any regular schedule, unprecedented crowds of people would come to attend the prayers led by him. I heard that strength declined in the jama'at in the neighbourhood mosques and he, too, did not continue.

As far as I know, the people of Isfahan generally knew him in person and liked him. He was also loved at the theology school of Qum. The 'ulama' of Qum would go forth eagerly to see him at the news of his arrival in the city. Like all other restrictions, he also refused to be bound by the conditions set for having murids and followers. May Allah shower His infinite mercy upon him and raise him with His awliya' on the Day of Resurrection.

With all his merits, it is not my claim that he was familiar with all the worlds that the Nahj al-balaghah embraces and had set his foot in all the domains encompassed by it. He had explored only a portion of its realms and that part of the Nahj al-balaghah had been incarnated in his person. The universe of the Nahj al-balaghah includes numerous worlds: the world of zuhd (abstinence, piety) and taqwa (God-fearing), the world of 'ibadah (worship, devotion) and 'irfan (mystic knowledge), the world of hikmah (wisdom) and philosophy, the world of moral preaching and guidance, the world of eschatology (malahim) and mysteries (mughayyabat), the world of politics and social responsibilities, the world of heroism and bravery ...; too many worlds to be conquered by any individual. Hajj Mirza 'Ali Aqa al-Shirazi had explored only a part of this great ocean and knew it well.

Nahj al-balaghah and the Present-Day Islamic Society:

The alienation from the Nahj al-balaghah was not confined to me or others like me, but pervaded through the Islamic society. Those who understood this book, their knowledge did not go beyond the translation of its words and explanatory notes on its sentences. The spirit and the content of the book were hidden from the eyes of all. Only lately, it may be said, the Islamic world has begun to explore the Nahj al-balaghah, or in other words, the Nahj al-balaghah has started its conquest of the Muslim world.

What is surprising is that a part of the contents of the Nahj al-balaghah, both in Shi'ite Iran and Arab countries, was first discovered either by atheists or non-Muslim theists, who revealed the greatness of the book to the Muslims. Of course, the purpose of most or all of them was to utilize the Nahj al-balaghah of 'Ali ('a) for justifying and confirming their own social views; but the outcome was exactly opposite of what they desired. Because, for the first time the Muslims realized that the views expressed grandiloquently by others had nothing new to offer and that they cannot surpass what is said in the Nahj al-balaghah of 'Ali ('a), or

translated into action through the character (sirah) of 'Ali and his disciples like Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr, and 'Ammar. The result of it was that instead of supporting the pretentious views of those who wished to exploit the Nahj al-balaghah, 'Ali and his book defeated their purpose. Nevertheless, it must be accepted that before this occurred, most of us had little knowledge of the Nahj al-balaghah and it hardly went beyond appreciation of few sermons about virtues of piety and abstinence. Nobody had yet recognized the significance of the valuable epistle of Mawla 'Ali to Malik al-'Ashtar al-Nakh'i; nobody had paid attention to it.

As mentioned in the first and second chapters of this book, the Nahj al-balaghah is a collection of sermons, precepts, prayers, epistles and aphorisms of 'Ali ('a) compiled by al-Sayyid al-Sharif al-Radi about one thousand years ago. However, neither the recorded words of Mawla 'Ali are confined to those collected by al-Sayyid al-Radi, nor was he the only man to compile the sayings of Amir al-Muminin. Al-Masudi, who lived a hundred years before al-Sayyid al-Radi, in the second volume of his work Muruj al-dhahab, writes: "At present there are over 480 sermons of 'Ali in the hands of the people," whereas the total number of sermons included by al-Sayyid al-Radi in his collection is 239 only.

There are, at present, two kinds of work that must be accomplished with respect to the Nahj al-balaghah, so that 'Ali's thought and his views on various important issues expressed in the Nahj al-balaghah, which are still relevant and are direly needed by the present-day Islamic society, may be brought to light. The second kind of work required in relation to the Nahj al-balaghah is research on the sources (asnad) and the documents related to its contents. Fortunately, we hear that Muslim scholars in various parts of the Islamic world are devoting themselves to both of these important tasks.

This book is a collection of a series of articles that originally appeared in the journal Maktab e Islam during 1351-52 (1972-73), now presented to the learned readers in the form of the present book. Formerly, I had delivered five lectures on this topic at the Husayniyyah Irshad. [5] Later, I took up with the idea of writing a series of articles to deal with the subject in greater detail.

From the outset, when I chose to call it "Sayri dar Nahj al-balaghah" ('A journey into the Nahj al-balaghah'), I was aware that my attempt does not deserve to be called more than a journey, or a short trip. This work, by no means, can deserve to be called a research study. I neither had the time and opportunity for a research study, nor did I consider myself fit for this task. Moreover, a profound and comprehensive research study of the contents of the Nahj al-balaghah, exploration of the thought of 'Ali, and, besides it, research about documentation of its contents, is the job of a group and not of a single individual. But as it is said, that which cannot be attained in entirety is not to be abandoned in entirety [6]. And since humble attempts open the way for great tasks, I started on my trip. Unfortunately, even this journey was not completed. The project that I had prepared for, and which the reader shall find mentioned in the third chapter, remained unaccomplished on account of many preoccupations.

I do not know whether will ever get the opportunity to continue my journey through the Nahj al-balaghah. But it is my great desire to be able to do so.

1. A LITERARY MARVEL

The Nahj al-balaghah is a magnificent collection of the inimitable sermons, invocations (du'a), wills or advices, epistles and aphorisms of Amir al-mu'minin, Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a), compiled by al-Sayyid al Sharif al-Radi (may God be pleased with him) about one thousand years ago. Time and years have not only failed to diminish the impressive freshness of this work, but have added constantly to its value as new concepts and ideas have emerged.

'Ali ('a) was undoubtedly a man of eloquence and delivered a large number of speeches that became famous. Likewise, numerous sayings containing philosophic wisdom were heard from him. He wrote many letters, especially during the days of his caliphate, which his admirers recorded and preserved with remarkable interest and zeal. Al-Mas'udi (d. 346/955-6), who lived almost a hundred years before al-Sayyid al-Radi (d. 406/1115), in the second volume of his Muruj al-dhahab, under the heading "Fi dhikr luma' min kalamihi, wa akhbarihi, wa zuhdih, says:

That which has been preserved by people of 'Ali's sermons, delivered on various occasions, exceeds 480 in number. 'Ali ('a) used to deliver his sermons extempore without any previous preparation. The people recorded [7] his words and practically derived benefit from them. [8]

The testimony of an informed researcher and scholar like al-Mas'udi bears out the large number of 'Ali's speeches that were extant during his time. Only 239 of these have been handed down to us in the Nahj al-balaghah, whereas their number, as mentioned by al-Mas'udi, was more than 480.

Moreover, al-Mas'udi informs us about the extraordinary dedication and ardour of various groups of people in recording and preserving 'Ali's words.

Al-Sayyid al-Radi and the Nahj al-balaghah:

Al-Sayyid al-Sharif al-Radi, or al-Sayyid al-Radi, as he is commonly called, was an ardent admirer of 'Ali's speeches. He was a scholar, a poet and a man of cultivated taste. Al-Tha'alibi, his contemporary, says of him:

He is the most remarkable man among his contemporary and the noblest amongst the sayyids of Iraq. Family and descent aside, he is fully adorned and endowed with literary excellence. He is the most remarkable poet among the descendants of Abu Talib, though there are many

distinguished poets among them. To say that of all the Quraysh no poet could ever surpass him would not be an exaggeration. [9]

It was on account of al-Sayyid al-Radi's earnest love of literature in general, and admiration for 'Ali's discourses in particular, that his interest was mainly literary in compiling 'Ali's words. Consequently, he gave greater attention to those passages which were more prominent from the literary point of view. This was the reason why he named his anthology "Nahj al-balaghah", [10] which means the "path of eloquence" giving little importance to mentioning his sources, a point rarely ignored by compilers of hadith (traditions). Only at times does he casually mention the name of a certain book from which a particular sermon or epistle has been taken. In a book of history or hadith, it is of primary importance that the sources be precisely specified; otherwise, little credence can be given to it. The value of a literary masterpiece, however, lies in its intrinsic beauty, subtlety, elegance and depth. Meanwhile, it is not possible to assert that al-Sayyid al-Radi was entirely oblivious of the historical value and other dimensions of this sacred work, or that his attention was exclusively absorbed by its literary qualities.

Fortunately, after al-Sayyid al-Radi, others took up the task of collecting the asnad of the Nahj al-balaghah. Perhaps the most comprehensive book in this regard is the Nahj al-sa'adah fi mustadrak Nahj al-balaghah by Muhammad Baqir al-Mahmudi, a distinguished Shi'ah scholar of Iraq. In this valuable book, all of 'Ali's extant speeches, sermons, decrees, epistles, prayers, and sayings have been collected. It includes the Nahj al-balaghah and other discourses which were not incorporated by al-Sayyid al-Radi or were not available to him. Apparently, except for some of the aphorisms, the original sources of all the contents of the Nahj al-balaghah have been determined. [11]

It should be mentioned that al-Sayyid al-Radi was not the only man to compile a collection of 'Ali's utterances; others, too, have compiled various books with different titles in this field. The most famous of them is Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim by al-Amudi, on which Muhaqqiq Jamal al-Din al-Khunsari has written a commentary in Persian and which has been recently printed by the University of Tehran through the efforts of the eminent scholar Mir Jalal al-Din al-Muhaddith al-'Urumawi.

'Ali al Jundi, the dean of the faculty of sciences at the Cairo University, in the introduction to the book 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, shi'ruhu wa hikamuh cites a number of these collections some of which have not yet appeared in print and exist as manuscripts. These are:

1. Dustur ma'alim al-hikam by al-Quda'i, the author of the al-Khutat;

2. Nathr al-la 'ali'; this book has been translated and published by a Russian Orientalist in one bulky volume.

3. Hikam sayyidina 'Ali. A manuscript of this book exists in the Egyptian library, Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah.

Two Distinctive Characteristics:

From the earliest times, two distinct merits have been recognized as characterizing 'Ali's discourses: firstly, literary elegance (fasahah) and eloquence (balaghah); secondly, their characteristic multi-dimensional nature. Any of these two qualities is sufficient for estimating 'Ali's words as valuable, but the combination of these two qualities (i.e. matchless eloquence, literary elegance, and their multi-dimensional nature-in that they deal with diverse and occasionally incompatible spheres of life) has made it almost miraculous. For this reason, 'Ali's speech occupies a position in between the speech of the human being and the Word of God. Indeed, it has been said of it that ' it is above the speech of creatures and below the Word of the Creator." [12]

Literary Beauty and Elegance:

This aspect of the Nahj al-balaghah requires no introduction for a reader of cultivated literary taste capable of appreciating the elegance and charm of language. Basically, beauty is a thing to be perceived and experienced and not to be described or defined. The Nahj al-balaghah, even after nearly fourteen centuries, has retained the same attractiveness, freshness, charm, and beauty for the present-day audience that it possessed for the people of earlier days. Here we do not intend to give an elaborate proof of this claim. Nevertheless, as a part of our discourse, we shall briefly describe the marvellous power of 'Ali's words in moving hearts and infusing them with the feeling of wonder. We shall start with 'Ali's own times and follow the effect of his discourses through the changes and variations in tastes, outlooks, and modes of thought during different successive ages up to the present day.

The companions of 'Ali ('a), particularly those who had a taste for language and literary grace, greatly admired him as an orator. 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas is one of them, who himself, as al Jahiz points out in his al-Bayan wa al-tabyin, [13] was a powerful orator He did not conceal his passion for listening to 'Ali speak or the enjoyment he derived from it. Once, when 'Ali was delivering his famous sermon called al-Shiqshiqiyyah, [14] Ibn al-'Abbas was also present. While 'Ali ('a) was speaking, an ordinary man of Kufah handed him a paper containing some questions, thus causing 'Ali to discontinue his speech. 'Ali, after reading the letter, did not continue his speech in spite of Ibn al-'Abbas 'urging him to continue. Ibn al-'Abbas later expressed the deep regret he felt on that occasion, saying, "Never in life was I ever so sorry for interruption of a speech as I was for the interruption of this sermon." [15]

Referring to a certain letter that 'Ali had written to Ibn al-'Abbas, he used to say: "Except the speech of the Holy Prophet, I did not derive so much benefit from any utterance as from this

one." [16]

Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, 'Ali's most contumacious enemy, also acknowledges his extraordinary eloquence. When Muhqin ibn Abi Muhqin forsook 'Ali and joined Mu'awiyah, in order to please Mu'awiyah, whose heart surged with ill-will and bitterness towards 'Ali, he told him, "I have left the dumbest of men and come to you." The flagrancy of this kind of flattery was so obvious that Mu'awiyah himself reproached him, saying: "Woe to you! You call 'Ali the dumbest of men? The Quraysh knew nothing about eloquence before him. It was he who taught them the art of eloquence."

Influence of 'Ali's Oratory:

Those who heard 'Ali speaking from the minbar were very much affected by his words. His sermons made hearts tremble and drew tears from the eyes. Even today, who can hear or read 'Ali's sermons without a tremor passing through his heart? Al-Sayyid al-Radi, after narrating 'Ali's famous sermon al-Gharra', [17] says:

As 'Ali delivered his sermon, tears flowed from the eyes of the listeners and hearts quivered with emotion.

Hammam ibn Shurayh, one of 'Ali's companions, was a man with a heart full of God's love and a soul burning with spiritual fire. At one time, he requested 'Ali to describe the qualities of pious and God-fearing men. 'Ali, on the one hand, did not want to turn down his request, and on the other, he was afraid that Hammam might not be able to bear what 'Ali would say. Therefore, he eludes this request giving only a perfunctory description of piety and the pious. Hammam is not only unsatisfied with this, but also his eagerness is heightened and he beseeches 'Ali to speak with greater elaboration. 'Ali commences his famous sermon and begins to describe the characteristics of the truly pious. He enumerates about one hundred and five [18] qualities of such human beings and goes on to describe more. But as 'Ali's words flow in fiery sequence, Hammam is carried to the very extreme of ecstasy. His heart throbs terribly and his spirit is driven to the furthest limits of emotion. It advances in eagerness like a restless bird trying to break out of its cage. Suddenly, there is a terrible cry and the audience turn around to find that it came from no other man than Hammam himself. Approaching, they find that his soul has left its earthly mould to embrace everlasting life. When this happened, 'Ali's remark, which carries both eulogy and regret, was: "I feared this would happen. Strange, yet this is how effective admonition affects sensitive hearts." [19] This is an example of the kind of influence 'Ali's sermons had over the minds and hearts of his contemporaries.

The Opinions of Ancient and Modern Scholars:

After the Holy Prophet (S), 'Ali ('a) alone has the distinction of being one whose speeches and

sayings were recorded and preserved by the people with particular care.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid quotes 'Abd al-Hamid al-Katib, the great master of Arabic prose [20] who lived during the early part of the second century of the Hijrah, as saying, "I learnt by heart seventy sermons of 'Ali, and from that time onwards my mind always overflowed [with inspiration]."

'Ali al Jundi also relates that when 'Abd al-Hamid was asked about what had helped him most in attaining literary excellence, he replied, "Memorizing of the discourses of the 'bald one'." [21]

In the Islamic period of history the name of 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Nubatah is proverbial for oratory among Arabs. He acknowledges that his intellectual and artistic attainments are indebted to 'Ali. Ibn Abi al-Hadid quotes him as saying:

I committed to memory about a hundred discourses of 'Ali; since then this has served me as an inexhaustible treasure [of inspiration].

Al Jahiz was a celebrated literary genius of the early third century of the Hijrah, and his book Al-Bayan wa al-tabyin is regarded as one of the four main classics of Arabic literature [22]. Often, in his book, he expresses his great wonder and immense admiration for 'Ali's discourses. From his remarks it is evident that a large number of 'Ali's sermons were commonly known to the people of his day. In the first volume of his Al-Bayan wa al-tabyin, [23] after mentioning that some people praise precision in talk or rather prefer silence and disapprove profusion in speech, al-Jahiz writes:

The profuseness of speech that has been regarded with disapproval is futile talk not that which is fruitful and illuminating. Otherwise, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas were men of prolific speech.

In the same volume of his work, he quotes this famous sentence of 'Ali ('a): [24]

The worth of a man lies in what he has mastered. [25]

Al Jahiz then devotes half a page to expressing his admiration for this sentence, and writes further:

If our book did not contain anything but this sentence, it would suffice it. The best speech is one little of which makes you dispense with much of it and in which the meanings are not concealed within words but are made manifest.

Then he remarks:

It appears as if Allah the Almighty has enveloped it with His glory, and covered it with the light of wisdom proportionate to the piety and taqwa of its speaker.

Al Jahiz, in the same work, where he discusses the oratory of Sasa'ah ibn Suhan al-'Abdi [26], says that:

No greater proof of his excellence as an orator is required than the fact that 'Ali occasionally came to him and asked him to deliver a speech.

Al-Sayyid al-Radi's following remarks in appreciation and praise of the speech of Imam 'Ali ('a) are famous:

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) was the reservoir and fountainhead of eloquence which derived its principles from his speeches and revealed its secrets through him. Every orator of mark tried to imitate him and every preacher learned from him the art of eloquence. Nevertheless, they lagged far behind him while he excelled them all. His speech (alone) bears the imprint of Divine Wisdom and the fragrance of the Prophet's eloquence.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid is a Mu'tazilite scholar of the 7th/13th century. He was a masterly writer and an adept poet, and, as we know, was an adorer of 'Ali's discourses. Accordingly, he expresses his profound admiration for 'Ali recurringly throughout his book. In the introduction to his famous commentary on the Nahj al-balaghah, he writes:

Rightly has 'Ali's discourse been regarded as being only inferior to that of the Creator and superior to that of all creatures. All people have learnt the arts of oration and writing from him. It suffices to say that the people have not recorded even one-tenth of one-twentieth from any other Companion of the Prophet (S) of what they recorded and preserved of 'Ali's discourses, although there were many eloquent persons among them. Again, it is sufficient that such a man as al Jahiz is all praise for 'Ali in his book al-Bayan wa al-tabyin.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid, in the fourth volume of his commentary, commenting on Imam 'Ali's letter to 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas (written after the fall of Egypt to Mu'awiyah's forces and the martyrdom of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, in which 'Ali ('a) breaks the news of this disaster to 'Abd Allah, who was at Basrah) writes: [27]

Look how eloquence has given its reins into the hands of this man and is docile to his every signal. Observe the wonderful order of the words coming one after the other to bow in his presence, or gushing like a spring that flows effortlessly out of the ground. Subhan Allah! An Arab youth grows up in a town like Mecca, has never met any sage or philosopher, yet his discourses have surpassed those of Plato and Aristotle in eloquence and profundity. He has no

intercourse with men of wisdom, but has surpassed Socrates. He has not grown up among warriors and heroes but amongst traders and merchants for the people of Mecca were not a warrior nation but traders, yet he emerges as the greatest warrior of supreme courage to have walked upon the earth. Khalil ibn Ahmad was asked: Of 'Ali, Bistam, and 'Anbasah, who was the more courageous? Replied he, "Bistam and 'Anbasah should be compared with other men; 'Ali was something superior to human beings." He came from the Quraysh, who were not the foremost in eloquence, for, the most eloquent among Arabs were Banu Jurhum, though they were not famous for wisdom or wit, yet 'Ali surpassed even Sahban ibn Wa'il and Qays ibn Sa'dah in eloquence.

Modern Perspectives:

During the fourteen centuries that have passed since 'Ali's times, the world has seen innumerable changes in language, culture and taste, and one may be led to think that 'Ali's discourses, which although might have invoked the adoration of the ancients, may not suit the modern taste. But one would be surprised to learn that such is not the case. From the point of view of literary form and content, 'Ali's dis-courses have the rare quality of transcending the limits imposed by time and place. That 'Ali's discourses are universal in their appeal to men of all times we shall discuss later. Here, after quoting the views of the classical writers, we shall quote the relevant views expressed by our contemporaries.

The late Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, formerly Mufti of Egypt, is a man who came to know the Nahj al-balaghah by accident. This preliminary acquaintance grew into a passionate love for the sacred book and led him to write a commentary on it. It also prompted him to endeavour to make it popular amongst the Arab youth. In the preface to his commentary, he says:

Among all those who speak the Arabic language, there is not a single man who does not believe that 'Ali's discourses, after the Quran and the discourses of the Prophet (S) are the noblest, the most eloquent, the most profound and the most comprehensive.

'Ali al-Jundi, the dean of the faculty of sciences at the Cairo University, in his book 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, shi'ruhu wa hikamuh, writing about 'Ali's prose, says:

A certain musical rhythm which moves the innermost depths of the soul is characteristic of these discourses. The phrases are so rhymed that it can be called 'prose-poetry'.

He then quotes Qudamah ibn Ja'far as saying:

Some have shown mastery in short sayings and others in long discourses, but 'Ali has surpassed all others in both of these, even as he has surpassed them in other merits.

Taha Husayn, the contemporary Egyptian writer of renown, in his book 'Ali wa banuh ('Ali and His Sons), recounts the story of a man during the Battle of al-Jamal. The man is in doubt as to which of the two sides is in the right. He says to himself, "How is it possible that such personalities as Talhah and al-Zubayr should be at fault?" He informs 'Ali ('a) about his dilemma and asks him whether it is possible that such great personalities and men of established repute should be in error. 'Ali answers him:

You are seriously mistaken and reversed the measure! Truth and false hood are not measured by the worth of persons. Firstly find out what is truth and which is falsehood, then you will see who stands by truth and who with falsehood.

What 'Ali means to say is that you have reversed the measure. Truth and falsity are not measured by the nobility or baseness of persons. Instead of regarding truth and falsehood as the measure of nobility and meanness, you prejudge persons by your own pre-conceived notions of nobility and meanness. Reverse your approach. First of all find out the truth itself, then you will be able to recognize who are truthful. Find out what is falsehood, and then you will identify those who are wrong. lt is not significant which person stands by truth and which sides with falsehood.

After quoting 'Ali's above-mentioned reply, Taha Husayn says:

After the Revelation and the Word of God, I have never seen a more glorious and admirably expressed view than this reply of 'Ali.

Shakib Arsalan, nicknamed "amir al-bayan" (the master of speech), is another celebrated contemporary writer. Once in a gathering held in his honour, in Egypt, one of the speakers mounted the rostrum and in the course of his address remarked: "There are two individuals in the history of Islam who can truly be named amir al-bayan: one of them is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and the other is Shakib." At which Shakib Arsalan (1871-1946), irritated, left his seat and walked to the rostrum. Deploring the comparison his friend had made between 'Ali and himself, he said: "What comparison is there between 'Ali and me! I am not worth even the strap of 'Ali's sandals!" [28]

Michael Na'imah, a contemporary Lebanese Christian writer, in the introduction to the book al-Imam 'Ali by George Jurdaq, also a Lebanese Christian, writes:

'Ali was not only a champion on the battlefield but was also a hero in all other fields: in sincerity of heart, in purity of conscience, in the spellbinding magic of speech, in true humanitarianism, in the finnness and warmth of faith, in the height of tranquility, in readiness to help the oppressed and the wronged, and in total submission to truth wherever it may lie and whichever form it assumes. He was a hero in all these fields.

I do not intend to quote more from those who paid tributes to 'Ali, for the above-quoted remarks are sufficient to prove my point. One who praises 'Ali extols his own merit, for:

He who admires the Sun's brilliance extols himself:

My two eyes are bright and my vision is not clouded

I conclude my discourse with 'Ali's own statement about himself. One day, one of his companions attempted to deliver a speech. He couldn't as he found himself tongue-tied. 'Ali told him:

You should know that the tongue is a part of man and under the command of his mind. If the mind lacks stimulation and refuses to budge, his tongue will not assist him. However, if the mind is ready his speech will not give him respite. Indeed we (the Ahl al-Bayt) are the lords of (the domain of) speech. In us are sunk its roots and over us are hung its branches. [29]

Al Jahiz, in the al-Bayan wa al-tabyin, relates from 'Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali that 'Ali ('a) once said:

We (the Ahl al-Bayt) are superior to others in five qualities: eloquence, good looks, forgiveness, courage, and popularity with women. [30]

Now we shall take up another characteristic of 'Ali's discourses, which is in fact the main theme of this book; that is, their multi-dimensionality.

The Nahj al-balaghah Among Literary Classics:

Most nations possess certain literary works which are regarded as 'masterpieces' or 'classics'. Here we shall limit our discussion to the classics of Arabic and Persian literature whose merits are more or less perceptible for us, leaving the other classics of the ancient world, Greece and Rome and so on, and the masterpieces of the modern age from Italy, England, France and other countries, to be discussed and evaluated by those who are familiar with them and qualified to discuss them.

Of course, an accurate judgement about the classics of Arabic and Persian is possible only for scholars who have specialized in the classical literature; but it is an accepted fact that every one of these masterpieces is great only in a particular aspect, not in every aspect. To be more precise, every one of the authors of these classics displayed his mastery only in a single, special field to which their ingenuity was confined, and occasionally if they have left their special field to tread other grounds they failed miserably.

In Persian there are numerous masterpieces in mystical ghazal, general ghazal, qasidah, epic, spiritual and mystical allegorical verse, etc; but as we know, none of the Persian poets of world renown has succeeded in creating masterpieces in all these literary forms. Hafiz is famous for mystical ghazal, Sa'di for anecdotes and general ghazal, Firdawsi for epic, Rumi for his allegorical and spiritual poetry, Khayyam for his philosophic pessimism and Nizami for something else. For this reason it is not possible to compare them with one another or prefer one over the other. All that can be said is that each one of them is foremost in his own field. If occasionally any of these poetic geniuses has left his special field to try another literary form, a visible decline in quality is readily perceptible. The same is true of Arab poets of the Islamic and pre-Islamic periods. There is an anecdote in the Nahj al-balaghah that once 'Ali ('a) was asked the question, "who is the foremost among Arab poets?" 'Ali replied:

To be sure all poets did not tread a single path so that you may tell the leader from the follower; but if one were forced to choose one of them, I would say that the foremost among them was al-Malik al-Dillil (the nickname of Umru' al-Qays). [31]

In his commentary, Ibn Abi al-Hadid cites with asnad (authentic sources) an anecdote under the above-mentioned comment. Here is what he writes:

During the holy month of Ramadan, it was 'Ali's custom to invite people to dinner. The guests were offered meat, but 'Ali himself abstained from the food which was prepared for the guests. After the dinner, 'Ali would address them and impart moral instruction. One night, as they sat for dinner, a discussion commenced about the poets of the past. After the dinner, 'Ali in the course of his discourse said: "The faith is the criterion of your deeds; taqwa is your shield and protector; good manners are your adornment; and forbearance is the fortress of your honour." Then turning to Abu al-'Aswad al-Du'ali, who was present and moments ago had taken part in the discussion about poets, said, "Let us see, who in your opinion is the most meritorious of poets?"

Abu al-'Aswad recited a verse of Abu Dawud al-'Ayadi adding the remark that in his opinion Abu Dawud was the greatest among poets. "You are mistaken; such is not the case," 'Ali told him. Whereupon the guests, seeing 'Ali taking an interest in their discussion, pressed him to express his opinion as to whom he considered the best among poets. 'Ali said to them: "It is not right to give a judgement in this matter, for, to be certain, the pursuits of the poets are not confined to a single field so that we may point out the forerunner amongst them. Yet, if one were forced to choose one of them, then it may be said that the best of them is one who composes not according to the period inclinations or out of fear and inhibition [but he who gives free rein to his imagination and poetic inspiration] . Asked as to whom this description would fit, 'Ali replied, "Al-Malik al-Dillil, Umru' al-Qays."

It is said that when inquired as to who was the most eminent poet of the Jahiliyyah (the pre-Islamic period), Yunus ibn Habib al Dabbi (d. 798 A.D.), the famous grammarian, answered:

The greatest of poets is Umru' al-Qays when he mounts his steed, [i.e. when he composes epic poetry motivated by the feelings of courage and bravery, and the passions roused on the battlefield]; al-Nabighah al Dhubyani when he flees in fear [i.e. when he expresses himself on the psychological effects of danger and fear]; Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma when he takes delight [in something]; and al-'A'sha, when he is in a gay and joyful mood." Yunus meant to say that every one of these poets had a special talent in his own field in which his works are considered to be master pieces. Each of them was foremost in his own speciality beyond which his talent and genius did not extend.

'Ali's Versatility:

One of the outstanding characteristics of Imam 'Ali's sayings which have come down to us in the form of the Nahj al-balaghah is that they are not confined to any particular field alone; 'Ali ('a), in his own words, has not trodden a single path only, but has covered varied and various grounds, which occasionally are quite antithetical. The Nahj al-balaghah is a masterpiece, but not of the kind which excels in one field such as the epic, the ghazal, sermon, eulogy, satire or love poetry; rather it covers multifarious fields, as shall be elaborated.

In fact, works which are masterpieces in a particular field exist, nevertheless their number is not great and they are countable on fingers. The number of works which cover numerous subjects but are not masterpieces is quite large. But the characteristic that a work be simultaneously a masterpiece without restricting itself to any one particular subject is an exclusive merit of the Nahj al-balaghah. Excepting the Quran, which is altogether a different subject to be dealt with independently, what masterpiece is comparable to the Nahj al-balaghah in versatility?

Speech is the spirit's envoy and the words of a man relate to the sphere in which his spirit dwells. Naturally, a speech which pertains to multiple spheres is characteristic of a spirit which is too creative to be confined to a single sphere. Since the spirit of 'Ali is-not limited to a particular domain but encompasses various spheres and he is in the terminology of the Islamic mystics, al-'insan al-kamil (a perfect man), al-kawn al jami' (a complete microcosm) and jami' kullal-hadarat, [32] the possessor of all higher virtues, so his speech is not limited to any one particular sphere. Accordingly, as we should say, in terms current today, that 'Ali's merit lies in the multidimensional nature of his speech, that it is different from one-dimensional works. The all-embracing nature of 'Ali's spirit and his speech is not a recent discovery. It is a feature which has invoked a sense of wonder since at least one thousand years. It was this quality that had attracted the attention of al-Sayyid al-Radi a thousand years ago, and he fell in love with 'Ali's speeches and writings. He writes:

Of 'Ali's wonderful qualities which exclusively belong to him, nobody sharing in it with him, is that when one reflects upon his discourses regarding abstinence (zuhd), and his exhortations concerning spiritual awakedness, for a while one totally forgets that the speaker

of these words was a person of highest social and political calibre, who ruled over vast territories during his time and his word was command for all. Even for a moment the thought does not enter the reader's mind that the speaker of these words might have been inclined to anything except piety and seclusion, anything except devotion and worship, having selected a quiet corner of his house or a cave in some mountain valley where he heard no voice except his own and knew nobody except himself, being totally oblivious of the world and its hustle and bustle. It is unbelievable that those sublime discourses on asceticism, detachment and abstinence and those spiritual exhortations came from somebody who pierced the enemy's ranks and went fighting to the very heart of their forces, with a sword in his hand, poised to sever the enemy's head, and who threw many a mighty warrior down from his steed, rolling into blood and dust. Blood drips from the edge of his sword and yet he is the most pious of saints and the most devoted of sages.

Then, after this, al-Sayyid al-Radi adds:

Frequently I discuss this matter with friends and it equally invokes their sense of wonder.

Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, too, was profoundly moved by this aspect of the Nahj al-balaghah, and it made him marvel at its swiftly changing scenes, which take the reader on a journey through different worlds. He makes a note of it in the introduction to his commentary of the Nahj al-balaghah.

Aside from his speech, in general, 'Ali ('a) had a spirit that was universal, all-embracing, and multidimensional, and he has always been eulogized for this quality. He is a just ruler, a devotee who remains awake all night worshipping God; he weeps in the niche of prayer (mihrab) and smiles on the field of battle. He is a tough warrior and a soft-hearted and kind guardian. He is a philosopher of profound insight and an able general. He is a teacher, a preacher, a judge, a jurist, a peasant, and a writer. He is a perfect man whose great soul envelops all spheres of the human spirit.

Safi al-Din al-Hilli (1277-1349 A.D.) says of him:

Opposites have come together in thy attributes,

And for that thou has no rivals.

A devout, a ruler, a man of forbearance, and a courageous one, A deadly warrior, an ascetic, a pauper, and generous to others, Traits which never gathered in one man, And the like of which none ever possessed;

A gentleness and charm to abash the morning breeze, A valour and might to melt sturdy rocks;

Poetry cannot describe the glory of thy soul,

Thy multifaceted personality is above the comprehension of critics.

Apart from what has been said, an interesting point is that in spite of the fact that 'Ali's discourses are about spiritual and moral issues, in them his literary charm and eloquence have attained their peak. 'Ali ('a) has not dealt with popular poetic themes such as love, wine and vainglory, which are fertile subjects for literary expression in prose and poetry. Moreover, he did not aim at displaying his skills in the art of oratory. Speech for him was a means and not an end in itself. Neither did he intend to create an object of art nor he wished to be known as an author of a literary masterpiece. Above all, his words have a universality which transcends the limits of time and place. His addressee is the human being within every person, and accordingly, his message does not know any frontier; although, generally, time and place impose limits on the outlook of a speaker and confine his personality.

The main aspect of the miraculous nature of the Quran is that its subjects and themes are altogether at variance with those current during the time of its revelation. It marks the beginning of a new era in literature and deals with another world and a different sphere. The beauty and charm of its style and its literary excellence are truly miraculous. In these aspects too, like in its other features, the Nahj al-balaghah comes closer to the Quran. In truth it is the offspring of the Holy Quran.

The themes of the Nahj al-balaghah:

The variety of topics and themes discussed in the Nahj al-balaghah unfolds a wide spectrum of problems that give colour and hue to these heavenly discourses. The author of this dissertation has no pretension to possessing the capacity to do the book full justice and analyse it in depth. I just intend to give a brief account of the variety of its themes, and it is my firm belief that others will come in the future who shall be able to do justice to this masterpiece of human power of speech.

A Glance at the Varied Problems Covered by the Nahj al-balaghah:

The various topics found in the Nahj al-balaghah, everyone of which is worthy of discussion, can be outlined as follows:

1. Theological and metaphysical issues;

2. Mystic path and worship;

3. Government and social justice;
4. The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the issue of caliphate;
5. Wisdom and admonition;
6. The world and worldliness;
7. Heroism and bravery;
8. Prophecies, predictions, and eschatology;
9. Prayers and invocations;
10. Critique of contemporary society;
11. Social philosophy;
12. Islam and the Quran;
13. Morality and the discipline of self;
14. Personalities;

and a series of other topics. Obviously, as the titles of the various chapters of the present book indicate, this author does not make any claim that the topics cited above are all that can be found in the Nahj al-balaghah. Neither does he claim that he has done an exhaustive study of these topics, nor has he any pretension to being considered competent for such work. That which is offered in these chapters is no more than a glimpse. Perhaps, in future, with Divine assistance, after deriving greater benefit from this inexhaustible treasure, the author may be able to undertake a more comprehensive study; or others may be blessed with the opportunity to accomplish such a job. God is wise and indeed His assistance and help is the best.

Notes:

[1] This is a reference to the following words of Ali, taken from Nahj al-balaghah, (ed. Subhi al Salih, Beirut 1387), Hikam, No 147 "O Kumayl, the mankind consists of three kinds of people: the sage adept in the knowledge of the Divine (alim rabbani), the novice of the path of deliverance (muta'allim 'ala sabili najat) and the vulgar populace'.

[2] Faqih means an expert in Islamic Law, the Shariah, whose study is called fiqh. Equivalent

terms are mufti, mujtahid, and ayatullah. (Tr.)

[3] Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 193

[4] Minbar is a raised platform with steps, the Islamic pulpit. Traditionally as a rule, the function at speaking at mourning gatherings, the majalis, has been performed in Iran by the Mullahs, or ruhaniyyun, as they are called in Iran. (Tr.)

[5] Husayniyyeh Irshad is a building in Tehran founded by the late Dr. Ali Shariati. (Tr.)

[6] This is in reference to an Arabic maxim: That which cannot be attained in entirety is not to be abandoned completely.

[7] Here it is not clear whether al Masudi means that Ali's sermons were recorded in writing, in books, or if he implies that people preserved them by memorizing them, or if he means both.

[8] al Masudi, Muruj al dhahab, (Beirut, 1983), vol II, p. 431

[9] al Tha'alibi quoted by Muhammad Abduh, Sharh Nahj al-balaghah, Introduction, p. 9

[10] Nahj means open way, road, course, method or manner; balaghah means eloquence, art of good style and communication, rhetoric etc

[11] Here the author adds that 'till now four volumes of this have been published'.

[12] The arabic is: fawq kalamil makhluq wa duna kalam ul khaliq

[13] al Jahiz, al-Bayan wa al-tabyin, vol. I p. 230

[14] Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 3

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., Rasail, No. 22

[17] Ibid., Rasail, No. 83

[18] According to my own counting, if I have not made a mistake

[19] Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 193

[20] Abd al Hamid was a scribe (katib) at the court of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan ibn Muhammad. Of Persian origin, he was the teacher of the famous Ibn al Muqaffa. It was said of him, 'the art of writing began with 'Abd al Hamid and ended with Ibn al Amid'. Ibn al Amid was a minister to the Buyids.

[21] Asla means someone whose frontal position, portion of the head is bald. Abd al Hamid while confessing the greatness of Imam Ali, mentions him in a detracting manner due to his attachment to the Umayyad court

[22] The other three being: Adab al kitab of Ibn Qutaybah, al Kamil, of al Mubarrad, and al Nawadir of Abu Ali al Qali: quoted from the introduction to al-Bayan wa al-tabyin by Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddamah.

[23] al-Bayan wa al-tabyin, vol. I p. 202

[24] Ibid, Vol. I p. 83

[25] Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. 81. See also al Sayyid al Radi's comment on this aphorism.

[26] Sasa'ah ibn Suhan al Abdi was of the eminent companions of Imam Ali. When after the death of the third Caliph, Ali became the Caliph, it was Sa'sa'ah who said to him: You [by assuming the caliphate] have given it beauty, while caliphate has not added lustre to your personality. You have raised its worth, and it has not raised your station. It stands in greater need of you than you need it.

[27] Nahj al-balaghah, Rasail, No. 35

[28] This anecdote was related by Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, a contemporary Lebanese scholar, at the occasion of a reception party given in his honor in the holy city of Mashad.

[29] Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 230

[30] al Jahiz, op. cit., vol. II p. 99

[31] A poetic form much popular in classical Arabic and Persian poetry. Ghazal is also another poetic form.

[32] Umru al Qays (500-540 AD) the famous poet of the pre-Islamic era (Jahiliyyah), the author of the first Mu'allaqat. Al Malik al Dillili is his nickname.

Al-Tawhid

The Glimpses of Nahj al Balaghah

Part II - Theology and Metaphysics

Murtadha Mutahhari

Transl. from Persian by Ali Quli Qara'i

One of the fundamental issues dealt with in the Nahj al-balaghah relates to theological and metaphysical problems. In all, there are about forty places in the sermons, letters, and aphorisms where these matters are discussed. Some of these pertain to the aphorisms, but more often the discussion is longer, covering sometimes several pages.

The passages on tawhid (Divine Unity) in the Nahj al-balaghah can perhaps be considered to be the most wonderful discussions of the book. Without any exaggeration, when we take into account the conditions in which they were delivered, they can almost be said to be miraculous.

The discussions on this theme in the Nahj al-balaghah are of a varied nature. Some of them constitute studies of the scheme of creation bearing witness to Divine creativity and wisdom. Here, 'Ali speaks about the whole system of the heaven and the earth, or occasionally discusses the wonderful features of some specific creature like the bat, the peacock or the ant, and the role of Divine design and purpose in their creation. To give an example of this kind of discussion, we may quote a passage regarding the ant:

Have you observed the tiny creatures that He has created? How He has made them strong and perfected their constitution and shaped their organs of hearing and sight, and how He has styled their bones and skin? Observe the ant with its tiny body and delicate form. It is so small that its features can hardly be discerned by the eye and so insignificant that it does not enter our thoughts. See how it roams about upon the ground and arduously collects its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its store. It collects during the summer for the

winter and, when winter arrives, it foresees the time to reemerge. Its livelihood is guaranteed and designed according to its built. The Benefactor and the Provider does not forget or forsake it. He does not deprive it, even though it should be in hard and dry stones and rocks. You will be amazed at the delicate intricacy of its wonderful constitution if you investigate the structure of its alimentary canals, its belly, and its eyes and ears which are in its head ... (Sermon 185)

However, most of the discussions about tawhid in the Nahj al-balaghah are rational and philosophical. The rare sublimity of the Nahj al-balaghah becomes manifest in these discourses. In these philosophical and rational discourses of the Nahj al-balaghah on tawhid what constitutes the focus of all arguments is the infinite, absolute and self-sufficing nature of the Divine Essence. In these passages, 'Ali ('a) attains to the heights of eloquence, and none, neither before him nor after him, has approached him in this aspect.

Another issue dealt with is that of the absolute simplicity (al-basatatal-mutlaqah) of the Divine Essence and negation of every kind of multiplicity, divisibility in the Godhead and refutation of separability of the Divine Attributes from the Divine Essence. This theme occurs repeatedly in the Nahj al-balaghah.

Also discussed is a series of other profound problems which had never been touched before him. They are: God being the First while also being the Last; His being simultaneously the Manifest and the Hidden; His priority over time and number, i.e. His pre-eternity is not temporal and His Unity is not numerical; His Supremacy, Authority, and Self-sufficiency; His Creativeness; that attendance to one affair does not prevent Him from attending to other affairs; the identity of Divine Word and Act; the limited capacity of human reason to comprehend His reality; that gnosis (ma'rifah) is a kind of manifestation (tajalli) of Him upon the intellects, which is different from conception or cognition by the mind; the negation of such categories and qualities as corporeality, motion, rest, change, place, time, similarity, opposition, partnership, possession of organs or instruments, limitation and number; and a series of other issues which we shall, God willing, mention later and give examples of every one of these. Even a thinker well-versed in the beliefs and views of ancient and modern philosophers would be struck with wonder to see the wide range and scope of the problems propounded in that wonderful book.

An elaborate discussion of the issues raised and dealt with in the Nahj al-balaghah would itself require a voluminous book and cannot be covered in one or two articles. Unavoidably, we shall be brief; but before we commence our brief survey, we are compelled to mention certain points as an introduction to our discussion.

A Bitter Fact:

We, the Shi'ah Muslims, must confess that we have been unjust in regard to our duty with

respect to the man whom we, more than others, take pride in following; or, at the very least, we must admit falling short in our duty towards him. In substance, any kind of failure in fulfilling our responsibility is an act of injustice on our part. We did not want to realize the significance of 'Ali ('a), or we had been unable to. All our energy and labour were devoted to proclaiming the Prophet's statements about 'Ali and to denouncing those who ignored them, but we failed to pay attention to the intellectual side of Imam 'Ali's personality.

Sadi says:

The reality of musk lies in its scent, Not in the perfumer's advice.

Applying Sa'di's words to our attitude regarding Imam 'Ali's personality, we did not realize that this musk, recommended by the Divine Perfumer, itself carried its pleasant aroma, and before everything else we should have tried to know its scent and become familiar with it. That is, we should have familiarized ourselves and others with its inner fragrance. The counsel of the Divine Perfumer was meant to acquaint the people with its pleasant redolence, not for the purpose that they may believe that it is musk and then devote all their energies trying to convince others by arguing with them, without bothering to acquaint themselves with its real fragrance.

Had the Nahj al-balaghah belonged to some other people, would they have treated it in the way we treated this great book? The country of Iran is the centre of Shi'ism and the language of its people is Persian. You have only to examine the translations and commentaries on the Nahj al-balaghah to make a judgement about what our accomplishment amounts to.

To take a more general case, the Shi'i sources of hadith (tradition) and texts of du'a' (prayers) are incomparable to the texts of the non-Shi'i works in the same field. This is also true of Divine teachings and other subjects. The problems and issues discussed in works like al-Kulayni's al-Kafi, or al-Shaykh al-Saduq's al-Tawhid, or al-'Ihtijaj of al-Tabarsi are nowhere to be found among the works of the non-Shi'is. It can be said that if occasionally similar issues are dealt with in the non-Shi'i books, the material is unmistakably spurious, for it is not only opposed to the prophetic teachings but is also contradictory to the Quranic fundamentals. There is a strong smell of anthropomorphism which hangs around them. Recently, Hashim Ma'ruf al-Hasani, in his book Dirasat fi al-Kafi li al-Kulayni wa al-Sahih li al-Bukhari, which is an original but a brief comparative study of al-Sahih of al-Bukhari and al-Kulayni's al-Kafi, has dealt with the traditions related to the problems of theology.

Shi'i Rationalism:

The discussion of theological problems and their analysis by the Shi'i Imams, of which the Nahj al-balaghah is the earliest example, was the main cause of the emergence of rationalistic approach and philosophic outlook in the Shi'i intellectual world from the earliest days of

Islam. This cannot be labelled as an innovation in Islam; rather, its basis was laid down by the Quran itself. It was in accordance with the approach of the Quran and for the purpose of its interpretation that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) expounded such issues. If anybody can be reproached in this matter, it is those who did not adopt this method and abandoned the means to follow it.

History shows that from the earliest Islamic era, the Shiah, more than any other sect, were interested in these problems. Amongst the Ahl al-Sunnah, the Mu'tazilites, who were nearer to the Shi'ah, did possess similar inclinations. But, as we know, the general view predominant among the Ahl al-Sunnah did not welcome it, and as a result the Mu'tazilite sect became extinct about the end of the 3rd/9th century .

Ahmad Amin, the Egyptian writer, confirms this view in the first volume of his Zuhr al-'Islam. After discussing the philosophic movement in Egypt during the reign of the Fatimids, who were a Shi'ah sect, he writes:

Philosophy is more akin to Shi'ism than it is to the Sunni Islam, and we witness the truth of this in the era of the Fatimid rule [in Egypt] and in that of the Buyids [in Iran]. Even during the later ages Iran, which is a Shi'ite country, has paid more attention to philosophy than any other Islamic country. In our own times, Sayyid Jamal al-Din al Asadabadi, who had Shi'ite inclinations and had studied philosophy in Iran, created a philosophic movement in Egypt when he arrived here.

Curiously, Ahmad Amin in his explanation of why the Shi'ah showed more inclination towards philosophy, commits an error, willfully or otherwise. According to him, "the reason for greater inclination on the part of the Shi'ah towards rational and philosophical discussions is to be found in their esotericism and their flair for ta'wil. [1] They were compelled to seek the assistance of philosophy for defence of their esotericism. That is why the Fatimid Egypt and Buyid Persia, and Iran during the Safawid and Qajar periods, were more disposed towards philosophy than the rest of the Islamic world."

This is sheer nonsense on the part of Ahmad Amin. It was the Imams ('a) of the Shi'ah who for the first time introduced philosophical approach, and it was they who introduced the most profound and intricate concepts with regard to theological problems in their arguments, polemics, sermons, ahadith, and prayers, of which the Nahj al-balaghah is one example. Even with regard to the prophetic traditions, the Shi'ah sources are far more sublime and profound than the traditions contained in the non-Shi'i sources. This characteristic is not confined to philosophy only, but is also true of kalam, fiqh, and usul al-fiqh, in which the Shi'ah enjoy a position of distinction. All this owes its origin to one and same source: stress on rationalism.

Some others have tried to trace the origin of this difference [between the Shi'i and the Sunni intellects] in the concept of "the Shi'ite nation". According to them, since the Persians are

Shi'ite and the Shi'ah are Persian, and as the Persians are a people with a philosophical temperament, fond of the intricacies of speculation and pure thought, with the help of their rich and strong philosophical tradition, they succeeded in raising the level of Shi'a thought and gave it an Islamic colour.

Bertrand Russell, in A History of Western Philosophy, expresses a similar view based on the above-mentioned argument. With his habitual or inherent impoliteness he puts forth this opinion. However, Russell lacks the capacity of vindicating his claim, since he was totally unfamiliar with Islamic philosophy and basically knew nothing about it. He was not qualified to express any informed opinion about the origins of Shi'ah thought and its sources.

Our rejoinder to the upholders of this view is: first of all, not all Shi'ah were Iranian, nor all Iranians were Shi'ah. Were Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Babawayh al- Qummi and Muhammad ibn Abi Talib al-Mazandarani Persian, but not Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud al-Sijistani and Muslim ibn Hajjaj al-Nishaburi?

Was al-Sayyid al-Radi, the compiler of the Nahj al-balaghah, of Persian origin? Were the Fatimids of Egypt of Persian descent?

Why was philosophic thought revived in Egypt with the inception of Fatimid rule and why did it decline with their fall? And why was it revived later, after a long interval, only through the influence of an Iranian Shi'ah?

The truth is that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) were the only real dynamic force behind this mode of thinking and this kind of approach. All scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah admit that among the Prophet's Companions only 'Ali ('a) was a man of philosophic wisdom, who had an altogether distinct rational approach. Abu 'Ali ibn Sina is quoted as having remarked:

'Ali's position among the Companions of Muhammad (S), was that of the "rational" in the midst of the "corporeal."

Obviously, the intellectual approach of the followers of such an Imam as 'Ali ('a) should be expected to be radically different from that of those who followed others. Moreover, Ahmad Amin and others have been susceptible to another similar misunderstanding. They express doubts with regard to the authenticity of ascription of such philosophic statements [as exist in the Nahj al-balaghah] to 'Ali ('a). They say that the Arabs were not familiar with such kind of issues and such arguments and elaborate analyses as are found in the Nahj al-balaghah before their acquaintance with Greek philosophy, and evidently, according to them, these discourses should have been composed by some later scholars familiar with Greek philosophy, and were attributed to Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a).

We also accept that the Arabs were not familiar with such ideas and notions. Not only the Arabs, the non-Arabs, too, were not acquainted with them, nor were those notions familiar to the Greeks and Greek philosophy. Ahmad Amin first brings down 'Ali ('a) to the level of such Arabs like Abu Jahl and Abu Sufyan and then he postulates his minor and major premises and bases his conclusion on them: The Arabs were unfamiliar with philosophical notions; 'Ali was an Arab: therefore 'Ali was also unfamiliar with philosophical notions. One should ask him whether the Arabs of the Jahiliyyah were familiar with the ideas and concepts that were propounded in the Quran. Had not 'Ali ('a) been brought up and trained by the Messenger of Allah himself? Didn't the Prophet (S) introduce 'Ali ('a) to his Companions as the most learned and knowledgeable amongst them? Why should we deny the high spiritual status of someone who enriched his inner self by drawing on the bounteous wealth of Islam in order to protect the prestige of some of the Prophet's Companions who could never rise above the ordinary level?

Ahmad Amin says that before acquaintance with Greek philosophy the people of Arabia were not familiar with the ideas and concepts found in the Nahj al-balaghah. The answer to this is that the Arabs did not become acquainted with the ideas and notions propounded in the Nahj al-balaghah even after centuries of familiarity with Greek philosophy. Not only the Arabs, even the non-Arab Muslims were not acquainted with these ideas, for the simple reason that there is no trace of them in Greek philosophy itself! These ideas are exclusively special to Islamic philosophy. The Islamic philosophers gradually picked these ideas up from the basic Islamic sources and incorporated them in their thought under the guidance of revelation.

Philosophical Notions Concerning Metaphysics

As mentioned before, the Nahj al-balaghah adopts two kinds of approach to the problems of theology. The first kind of approach calls attention to the sensible world and its phenomena as a mirror reflecting the Knowledge and Perfection of the Creator. The second approach involves purely rationalistic and philosophical reflections. The latter approach accounts for the greater part of the theological discussions of the Nahj al-balaghah. Moreover, it is the only approach adopted in regard to the discussion about the Divine Essence and Attributes.

As we know, the value of such discussions and the legitimacy of such reflections have been always questioned by those who consider them improper from the viewpoint of reason or canon, or both. In our own times, a certain group claims that this kind of analysis and inference does not agree with the spirit of Islam and that the Muslims were initiated into such kind of speculations under the influence of Greek philosophy and not as a result of any inspiration or guidance effused from the Quran. They say that if the Muslims had adhered closely to the Quranic teachings they would not have entangled themselves with these tortuous clebates. For the same reason, they view with suspicion the authenticity of such speculations found in the Nahj al-balaghah and their ascription to Imam 'Ali ('a).

In the second and third centuries a group of people opposed such kind of discussions and questioned their legitimacy, raising doctrinal objections. They insisted that it is obligatory for Muslims to be satisfied with the literal and commonly understood meaning of the words of the Quran, and regarded every kind of inquiry into the meaning of the Quran as an innovation (bid'ah) in religion. For instance, if someone inquired about the meaning of the Quranic verse "The All-compassionate sat Himself upon the Throne " [20:5], he was confronted by the displeasure of those who regarded such questions as not only improper but distasteful. He would be told: "The exact meaning is unknown and questioning is heresy". [2]

During the 3rd/9th century, this group, which later came to be called Ash'arites, overwhelmed the Mu'tazilites, who considered such speculations to be within the bounds of legitimacy. This victory of the Asharites delivered a severe blow to the intellectual life of Islam. The Akhbaris, who were a Shi'i school which flourished during the period between the 10th/16th and the 14th/20th centuries-and particularly during the 10th/16th and 11th/17th centuries-followed the Asha'irah in their ideas and beliefs. They raised doctrinal objections against ratiocination. Now we shall proceed to discuss the objections raised from a rationalist point of view.

As a result of the triumph of the empirical and experimental method over the deductive approach in Europe, especially in the physical sciences, the view began to prevail that rational speculation was unreliable not only in the physical sciences but also in all scientific disciplines and that the only reliable method was that of empirical philosophy. The result of it was that tne problems of theology were viewed with doubt and suspicion, because they lay beyond the domain of experimental and empirical observation.

The past victories of the Ash'arites, on the one hand, and the amazing triumphs of the empirical method, which followed one another in quick succession, on the other hand, drove some non-Shi'ite Muslim writers to the extremes of excitement. The outcome was the eclectic opinion that from the religious (Shar'i) as well as the rational point of view the use of deductive method even in problems of theology should be discarded. From the Shar'i viewpoint, they made the claim that according to the outlook of the Quran the only approach valid in theology was the empirical and experimental method and the study of the natural phenomena and the system of creation; the rest, they declared, is no more than an exercise in futility. They pointed out that in scores of its verses, the Quran in most unequivocal terms has invited human beings to study the phenomena of nature; it considers the keys to the secrets of the origin and workings of the universe to be concealed within nature itself. In this way they echoed, in their writings and speeches, the ideas expressed by the European proponents of empirical philosophy .

Farid al-Wajdi in his book 'Ala atlal al-madhhab al-maddi (On the Ruins of Materialism), and Sayyid Abu al-Hasan al-Nadawi, in his Madha khasira al-'alam bi-inhitat al-Muslimin ("What the World Lost Through the Decline of Muslims") and the writers belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin) such as Sayyid Qutb and others, have supported this view, vehemently attacking the opposite viewpoint.

Al-Nadawi, in his above-mentioned book, says:

The prophets informed men about the existence of God and His Attributes and informed them about the origin and beginning of the world and the ultimate destiny of man, putting this free information at his disposal. They relieved him of the need to understand and discuss these problems the basics of which lie beyond our reach (because these problems belong to the sphere of the supra-sensible and our knowledge and experience is limited to the physical and the sensible). But men did not value this blessing and entangled themselves in debates and speculations about these problems, and strode into the dark regions of the hidden and the unknowable. [3]

The same author, in another chapter of the same book, where he discusses the causes of the decline of Muslims, under the heading "The Neglect of Useful Sciences," criticizes the muslim 'ulama' in these words:

The Muslim scholars and thinkers did not give as much importance to practical and experimental sciences as they gave to debating about metaphysics, which they had learnt from Greek philosophy. The Greek metaphysics and theology is nothing more than Greek's polytheistic mythology presented in a philosophical outfit, and is no more than a series of meaningless conjectures expressed in an absurd jargon. God has exempted Muslims from debate, speculation and analysis in these matters, which are not much different from the analytic pursuits of the Alchemists. But out of ingratitude for this great blessing, the Muslims wasted their energy and genius in problems of this sort. [4]

Without doubt, the views of the like of Farid al-Wajd; and al-Nadawi should be regarded as a kind of return to Ash'arism, though dressed in contemporary style akin to the language of empirical philosophy.

Here, we cannot enter into a philosophic discussion about the value of philosophic reflection. In the chapters entitled "The Value of Information" and "Origin of Multiplicity in Perception" of the book The Principles and Method of Realism, we have discussed the matter in sufficient detail. Here, we shall confine ourselves to the Quranic aspect of this problem, and investigate whether the Holy Quran considers the study of nature to be the only valid method of inquiry into theological problems, or whether it allows for another approach besides the above-mentioned.

However, it is essential to point out that the disagreement between the Ash'arites and the non-Ash'arites is not about the legitimacy of the use of the Book and the Sunnah as sources in the problems of theology; rather, the disagreement concerns the manner of their utilization. According to the Ash'arites, their application should not exceed mute acceptance. According to them, we assign the various Attributes like Unity, Omniscience, Omnipotence and the rest

to God because they have been ascribed to Him by the Shar'iah, otherwise we would not know whether God is such or not, because the basic principles and essentials dealing with God are beyond our reach. Therefore, according to them, we are forced to accept God as such, but we cannot know or understand that God is such. The role of the religious texts is that they prescribe for us the way we ought to think and believe so that we may follow it in our thought and beliefs.

According to the contestants of this view, these issues are amenable to human understanding, like any other rational concept or idea. That is, there exist certain principles and essentials which if known properly enable man to understand them. The role of the religious texts lies in their capacity to inspire, motivate, and guide human reason by putting understandable principles and essentials at its disposal. Basically servitude in intellectual matters is absurd. It is like ordering one to think in a certain fashion, and asking him to derive certain prescribed conclusions. It is like ordering someone to see a thing in a certain fashion and then asking him, "How do you see it? Is it big or small? black or white?" Servitude in thinking does not mean anything other than absence of thinking and acceptance without reflection.

In short, the question is not whether it is possible for man to go beyond the teachings of the Revelation. God be our refuge, there is nothing that lies beyond them; because that which has reached us through Revelation and the Household of the Revelation (i.e. the Ahl al-Bayt [A]) is the utmost limit of perfection concerning knowledge of the Divine. Here our debate centres upon the capacity of human thought and reason, whether it can, when supplied with the basic principles and essentials, undertake an intellectual journey through the world of theological problems [5] or not.

As to the invitation of the Quran to study and inquiry about the phenomena of creation, and its emphasis on nature as a means for attaining the knowledge of God and the supra-natural, it should be said that it is, indubitably, a basic principle of the Quranic teachings. It is with extraordinary insistence that the Quran asks human beings to inquire into the nature of the earth, the sky, the plants and animals, and man himself, and urges them to study them scientifically. It is also indubitable that the Muslims did not take enough worthy steps in this direction. Perhaps the real reason behind it was Greek philosophy, which was deductive and based on pure speculation, and they used this approach even in the field of the physical sciences. Nevertheless, as the history of science bears testimony, the muslim scientists did not altogether abandon the experimental method in their studies like the Greeks. The Muslims were the pioneers of the experimental method, not the Europeans, as is commonly thought, who followed on the tracks first laid by the Muslims.

The Value of Study of the Natural Phenomena:

Aside from all of this, the question worthy of consideration is whether the Quran, besides its emphasis on the study of the creatures of earth, water, and air, allows other ways of

approaching the issue, or if it closes all other doors. The question is whether the Quran, even as it invites people to study the signs of God (ayat), also welcomes other modes of intellectual endeavour. Basically, what is the value of inquiry into the works of creation (an inquiry which the Quran urges us, explicitly or implicitly, to undertake), from the viewpoint of initiating us into the awareness and consciousness which this heavenly Book aims to cultivate?

The truth is that the measure of assistance provided by the study of the works of the creation in understanding the problems explicitly pointed out by the Holy Quran is quite restricted. The Quran has propounded certain problems of theology which are by no means understandable through the study of the created world or nature. The value of study of the system of creation is limited only to the extent to which it proves that the world is governed by a Power which knows, designs, plans, and administers it. The world is a mirror, open to empirical experiment, only to the extent that it points towards something that lies beyond nature and discloses the existence of a Mighty Hand which runs nature's cosmic wheels.

But the Quran is not content that man should only know that a Mighty, Knowing, and Wise Power administers this universe. This may perhaps be true of other heavenly scriptures, but is by no means true of the Holy Quran, which is the final and ultimate heavenly message and has a great deal to say about God and the reality transcending nature.

Purely Rationalistic Problems:

The most basic problem to which the mere study of the world of creation fails to provide an answer is the necessity of existence and uncreatedness of the Power which transcends nature. The world is a mirror in the sense that it indicates the existence of a Mighty Hand and a Wise Power, but it does not tell us anything more about Its nature. It does not tell us whether that Power is subservient to something else or not, or if it is self-subsisting. And if it is subject to something else, what is that? The objective of the Quran is not only that we should know that a Mighty Hand administers the world, but that we may know that that Administrator is "Allah" and that "Allah" is the indefinable: (There is nothing like Him), whose Essence encompasses all perfection, or in other words, that "Allah" signifies Absolute Perfection and is the referent of, (His is the loftiest likeness). How can the study of nature give us an understanding of such notions and concepts?

The second problem is that of the Unity of God. The Quran has stated this issue in a logical form and used a syllogistic argument to explain it. The method of argument it has employed in this regard is what is called 'exclusive syllogism' or 'reductio ad impossible' (burhan al-tamanu'). On occasion it eliminates the possibility of multiplicity in the efficient cause as in the following verse: [6]

If there had been (multiple) gods in them (i.e. the earth and the heaven) other than God, they would surely go to ruin ... (21:22)

At other times it argues by eliminating the possibility of multiplicity in the final cause:

God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god besides Him; for then each god would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over others ... (23:91)

The Quran never suggests that the study of the system of creation can lead us to the knowledge of the Unity of the Godhead so as to imply that the essential knowledge of the transcendental Creator be considered attainable from that source. Moreover, such a suggestion would not have been correct.

The Quran alludes to various problems as indicated by the following examples:

No thing is like Him ... (42:11) And God's is the loftiest likeness ... (16:60) To Him belong the Names most Beautiful. (20:8) And His is the loftiest likeness in the heavens and the earth ... (30:27) He is God, there is no god but He. He is the King, the All-holy, the All-peaceable. the All-faithful, the All-preserver, the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the All-sublime ... (59:23) And to God belong the East and the West; whither so ever you turn, there is the Face of God ... (2:115) And He is God in the heavens and the earth; He knows your secrets, and what you publish ... (6:3) He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; He has knowledge of everything. (57:3) He is the Living, the Everlasting ... (2:255) God, is the Everlasting, [Who] has not begotten, and has not been begotten and equal to Him is not any one. (112:2-4)

Why does the Quran raise such issues? Is it for the sake of propounding mysterious matters incomprehensible to man, who, according to al-Nadawi, lacks the knowledge of its essential principles, and then asking him to accept them without comprehending their meaning? Or, the Quran actually does want him to know God through the attributes and descriptions that have come in it? And, if this is true, what reliable approach does it recommend? How is it possible to acquire this knowledge through the study of the natural phenomena? The study of the creation teaches us that God has knowledge of the things; that is, the things that He has made were created knowingly and wisely. But the Quran expects us not only to know this, but also stresses that:

Indeed God has the knowledge of everything. (2:231) And not so much as the weight of an atom in earth or heaven escapes from thy Lord, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but in a Manifest Book. (10:61) Say: "If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would be spent before the Words of my Lord are spent, though We brought replenishment the like of it. " (18:109)

This means that God's knowledge is infinite and so is His power. How and wherefore is it

possible through perception and observation of the world of creation to reach the conclusion that the Creator's Knowledge and Power are infinite? The Quran, similarly, propounds numerous other problems of the kind. For instance, it mentions al-lawh al-mahfuz (the Protected Tablet), lawh al-mahw wa al-'ithbat (The Tablet of Expunction and Affirmation), jabr and ikhtiyar (determinism and free will), wahy (revelation) and ilham (intuition), etc.; none of which are susceptible to inquiry through the empirical study of the world of creation.

It must be admitted that the Quran, definitely, has raised these problems in the form of a series of lessons and has emphasized their importance through advice and exhortation. The following verses of the Quran may be quoted in this connection:

What, do they not meditate in the Quran? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts? .... (47:24) (This is) a Scripture that We have revealed unto thee, full of blessing, that they may ponder its revelations, and that men of understanding may reflect. (38:29)

Inevitably, we are forced to accept that the Quran assumes the existence of a reliable method for understanding the meaning of these truths, which have not been revealed as a series of obscure incomprehensibles which lie beyond the reach of the human mind.

The scope of problems propounded by the Quran in the sphere of metaphysics is far greater than what can be resolved or be answered through the study of physical creation. This is the reason why the Muslims have pursued these problems, at times through spiritual and gnostic efforts, and at other times through speculative and rational approach.

I wonder whether those who claim that the Quran considers the study of nature as the sole, sufficient means for the solution of metaphysical problems, can give a satisfying answer in regard to the multifarious problems propounded by it, a characteristic which is special to this great heavenly Book.

'Ali's sole source of inspiration in his exposition of the problems mentioned in the previous chapters is the Holy Quran, and the sole motive behind his discourses is exegetical. Perhaps, had it not been for 'Ali ('a) the rationalistic and speculative aspects of the Quran would have forever remained uninterpreted.

After these brief introductory remarks on the value of these issues, we shall go on to cite some relevant examples from the Nahj al-balaghah.

The Divine Essence and Attributes:

In this section we shall cite some examples of the Nahj al-balaghah's treatment of the problems of theology related with Divine Essence and Attributes. Later we shall make a brief comparative study of the issue in various schools and conclude our discussion on this aspect

of the Nahj al-balaghah.

However, before proceeding further, I ask for the reader's pardon that the discussion in the last three sections became a bit technical and philosophical, which is not very welcome for those not used to it. But what is the remedy? Discussion on a book such as the Nahj al-balaghah does entail such ups and downs. For this reason, we shall limit ourselves to giving only a few examples from the book on this subject, and refrain from any elaborate discussion. Because, if we were to comment on every sentence of the Nahj al-balaghah, the result will be, as is said:

My mathnawi requires seventy maunds of paper.

The Divine Essence:

Does the Nahj al-balaghah have anything to say about the Divine Essence and how to define it? The answer is, Yes, and a lot. However, much of the discussion revolves around the point that the Divine Essence is Absolute and Infinite Being, without a quiddity. His Essence accepts no limits and boundaries like other beings, static or changeable, which are limited and finite. A changeable being is one which constantly transcends its former limits and assumes new ones. But such is not the Divine Essence. Quiddity, which may qualify and confine Him within limits of finitude, is not applicable to Him. None of the aspects of being are devoid of His Presence, and no kind of imperfection is appllicable to Him, except absence of any imperfection whatsoever: the only thing amiss in Him is absence of defect or inadequacy of any kind. The sole kind of negation applicable to Him is the negation of all negations. The only kind of non-being attributable to Him is the negation of any kind of imperfection in relation to Him. He is free from all shades of non-being which characterize the creatures and effects. He is free from finitude, multiplicity, divisibility, and need. The only territory that He does not enter is that of nothingness and non-being. He is with every thing, but not in any thing, and nothing is with Him. He is not within things, though not out of them. He is over and above every kind of condition, state, similarity, and likeness. For, these qualities relate to limited and determinate beings characterized by quiddity:

He is with everything but not in the sense of [physical] nearness. He is different from every thing but not in the sense of separation. (Sermon 1)

He is not inside things in the sense of physical [pervasion or] penetration, and is not outside them in the sense of [physical] exclusion [for exclusion entails a kind of finitude]. (Sermon 186)

He is distinct from things because He overpowers them, and the things are distinct from Him because of their subjection to Him. (Sermon 152)

That is, His distinctness from things lies in the fact that He has authority and control over them. However, His power, authority and sovereignty, unlike that of the creatures, is not accompanied with simultaneous weakness, subjugation, and subjection. His distinction and separateness from things lies in the fact that things are totally subject to His power and authority, and that which is subject and subordinated can never be like the one who subjugates and commands control over it. His separateness from things does not lie in physical separation but is on account of the distinction which lies between the Provider and the provided, the Perfect and the imperfect, the Powerful and the weak.

These kind of ideas are replete in 'Ali's discourses. All the problems which shall be discussed later are based on the principle that Divine Essence is Absolute and Infinite, and the concepts of limit, form and condition do not apply to it.

Divine Unity an Ontological, not a Numerical Concept:

Another feature of tawhid (monotheism) as propounded by the Nahj al-balaghah is that Divine Unity is not numerical, but something else. Numerical unity means the oneness of something which has possibility of recurrence. It is always possible to imagine that the quiddity and form of an existent is realizable in another individual being. In such cases, the unity of an individual possessing that quiddity is numerical oneness and stands in opposition to duplicity or multiplicity.

'It is one,' means that there is not another like it, and inevitably this kind of unity entails the quality of being restricted in number, which is a defect; because one is lesser in number as compared to two or more of its kind. But, if a being be such that assumption of recurrence with regard to it is impossible, since it is infinite and unlimited, and if we assume another like it to exist, it will follow that it is the same as the first being or that it is something which is not similar to it and therefore cannot be called a second instance of it. In such a case, unity is not numerical. That is, this kind of unity is not one opposed to duplicity or multiplicity, and when it is said 'It is one,' it does not mean that 'there are not two, three or more of its kind,' but it means that a second to it is unconceivable.

This notion can further be clarified through an example. We know that the astronomers and physicists are not in agreement about the dimensions of the universe, whether it is limited in size or infinite. Some scientists have favoured the idea of an unlimited and infinite universe; others claim that the universe is limited in dimensions so that if we travel in any direction, we shall reach a point beyond which there is no space. The other issue is whether the universe in which we live is the only universe in existence, or if there are other universes existing besides it.

Evidently, the assumption of another physical world beyond our own is a corollary to the assumption that our universe is not infinite. Only in this case it is possible to assume the

existence of, say, two physical universes each of which is limited and has finite dimensions. But if we assume that our universe is infinite, it is not possible to entertain the assumption of another universe existing beyond it. For, whatever we were to assume would be identical with this universe or a part of it.

The assumption of another being similar to the Being of the One God-like the assumption of another physical universe besides an infinite material universe-amounts to assuming the impossible, for the Being of God is absolute: Absolute Selfhood and Absolute Reality.

The notion that Divine Unity is not a numerical concept, and that qualifying it by a number is synonymous with imposing limits on the Divine Essence, is repeatedly discussed by the Nahj al-balaghah:

He is the One, but not in a numerical sense. (Sermon 152)

He is not confined by limits nor counted by numbers. (Sermon 186)

He who points to Him, admits for Him limitations; and he who admits limitations for Him has numbered Him. (Sermon 1)

He who qualifies Him limits Him. He who limits Him numbers Him. He who numbers Him denies His pre-eternity. (Sermon 152)

Everything associated with unity is deficient except Him. (Sermon 65)

How beautiful, profound, and full of meaning is the last sentence. It states that everything except the Divine Essence is limited if it is one. That is, every thing for which another of its kind is conceivable is a limited being and an addition of another individual would increase its number. But this is not true of the Unity of the Divine Essence; for God's Unity lies in His greatness and infinity, for which a like, a second, an equal or a match is not conceivable.

This concept that Divine Unity is not a numerical notion is exclusively an Islamic concept, original and profound, and unprecedented in any other school of thought. Even the Muslim philosophers only gradually realized its profundity through contemplating the spirit of the original Islamic texts and in particular the discourses of 'Ali ('a), and ultimately formally incorporated it in the Islamic metaphysical philosophy. There is no trace of this profound concept in the writings of the early Islamic philosophers like al Farabi and Ibn Sina. Only the later philosophers ushered this concept into their philosophic thinking calling it "Really True Unity," in their terminology.

God, The First and the Last; the Manifest and the Hidden:

Of the many issues discussed by the Nahj al-balaghah is the notion that God is the First and the Last, the Hidden and the Manifest. Of course this, too, like other notions, has been deduced from the Holy Quran; though here we are not going to quote the verses from the Quran. God is the First, but His precedence is not temporal so as to be in contradiction with His being the Last. He is the Manifest, but not in the sense of being physically visible or perceptible to the senses; His Manifestness does not contradict His Hiddenness. In fact His Firstness is identical with His Lastness and similarly His Manifestness and Hiddenness are identical; they are not two different things:

Praise be to Allah, for whom one condition does not precede another, so that He may he the First before being the Last or may be Manifest before being Hidden ... (Sermon 65)

Time is not His accomplice, nor does He need the assistance of tools and agents His Being transcends time. His Existence transcends nothingness and His pre-eternity transcends all beginning. (Sermon 186)

The Divine Essence's transcendence over time, nothingness, beginning, and end is one of the most profound concepts of al-hikmah philosophy. God's pre-eternity does not mean that God has always existed. Certainly God has always existed but Divine pre-eternity (azaliyyah) is something greater in meaning than 'existence at all times'; because, 'existing at all times' assumes existence in time; but God's Being has not only been at all times, It precedes time itself. This is the meaning of Divine pre-eternity. This shows that His precedence is something other than temporal precedence.

Praise be to God, whose creation bears testimony to His Existence; temporality (huduth) of whose creation is the evidence of His preternity the similarity and likeness amongst whose creation proves that He is unique. The senses do not perceive Him and nothing can conceal Him. (Sermon 152)

That is, God is both Hidden and Manifest. By Himself He is Manifest but is Hidden from the human senses. His Hiddenness from the senses is due to man's own limitations and not on account of Him.

It needs no proof that existence is synonymous with manifestation; the more powerful the existence of a being, the more manifest it would be. Conversely, the weaker its being is and the more intermingled it is with non-being, the less manifest it is to itself and others.

For everything, there are two modes of being: its being-in-itself (wujud fi nagsih), and its being-for-others. The being of every thing for us depends upon the structure of our senses and certain special conditions. Accordingly, the manifestation of a thing is also of two kinds: its manifestation-in-itself (zuhur fi nafsih) and its manifestation-for-others.

Our senses, on account of their limitations, are able to perceive only a limited number of finite objects possessing the characteristics of similarity and opposition. The senses can perceive colours, shapes, sounds, etc., which are limited temporally and spacially; that is, their existence is confined within a particular time and place. Now if there existed a uniform light, always and everywhere, it would not be perceptible. A continuous monotonous sound heard always and everywhere would not be audible.

The Being of God, which is absolute being and absolute reality, is not confined to any particular time and place, and is hidden from our senses. But God in Himself is absolutely manifest; the perfection of His manifestness, which follows from the perfection of His Being, is itself the cause of His hiddenness from our senses. The two aspects of His manifestness and hiddenness are one and the same in His Essence. He is hidden because He is perfectly manifest, and this perfect manifestness conceals Him.

Thou, who art hidden on account of Thy perfect brilliance, Thou Art the Manifest, hidden in Thy manifestness.

The veil on Thy face is also Thy face,

So manifest Thou art,

Thy manifestness conceals Thee from the world's eyes.

An Appraisal

An appraisal however brief of the approach of the Nahj al-balaghah and its comparison with that of other schools of thought is essential for discovering the true worth of its views on the problems of theology. We shall confine ourselves to the brief, though not quite sufficient, examples quoted in the foregoing pages and proceed to evaluate them.

The subject of the Divine Essence and Attributes is one which has been discussed a lot by the ancient and modern philosophers, mystics and Sufis of the East and the West. But in general their method and approach is totally different from that of the Nahj al-balaghah, whose approach is highly original and unprecedented. Only in the Holy Quran can be found a precedent for the Nahj al-balaghah. Apart from the Holy Quran, we do not find any other source that provides some ground for the discourses of the Nahj al-balaghah.

As pointed out earlier, some scholars, because of their failure to trace back to some earlier source the notions elaborated in the Nahj al-balaghah, have questioned the authenticity of ascription of these discourses to 'Ali ('a). They have supposed that these discourses appeared in a later period, after the appearance of the Mu'tazilites and assimilation of Greek thought, heedless of the saying:

The mean earth with the sublime heaven does not compare!

What ignorance to compare the Mu'tazilite and Greek ideas with the teachings of the Nahj al-balaghah !

The Nahj al-balaghah and the Notions of Kalam:

The Nahj al-balaghah, while it ascribes all the Attributes of perfection to God, the Exalted, negates any separation of these Attributes from His Essence and does not consider them as an appendage of Divine Essence. On the other hand, the Ash'arites, as we know, consider the Divine Attributes to be additional to Essence and the Mu'tazilites negate all Attributes.

The Ash'arite believes in Separation [of the Attributes from the Essence]

The Mu'tazilite speaks of subservience [of the Attributes to the Essence].

This has led some to imagine that the discourses found in the Nahj al-balaghah on this topic are fabrications of a later period under the influence of Mu'tazilite views; whereas, anyone with some insight can readily perceive that the Attributes negated by the Nahj al-balaghah with respect to Divine Essence are qualities of imperfection and limitation; for the Divine Essence, being infinite and limitless, necessitates identity of the Attributes with the Essence, not negation of the Attributes as professed by the Mu'tazilites. Had the Mu'tazilites reached such a notion they would never have negated the Divine Attributes considering them subservient to the Essence.

The same is true of the views on the createdness or temporality (huduth) of the Quran in the sermon 184. One may, possibly, imagine that these passages of the Nahj al-balaghah relate to the latter heated controversies among the Islamic theologians (mutakallimun) regarding the eternity (qidam) or temporality (huduth) of the Holy Quran, and which might have been added to the Nahj al-balaghah during the latter centuries. However, a little reflection will reveal that the discourses of the Nahj al-balaghah related to this issue have nothing to do with the debate on the Quran being either created or uncreated, which was a meaningless controversy, but relates to the creative command (amr takwini), and Will of the Almighty. 'Ali ('a) says that God's Will and His command represent Divine Acts and, therefore, are hadith and posterior to the Essence; for if the command and Will were co-eternal and identical with His Essence, they will have, necessarily, to be considered His associates and equals. 'Ali ('a) says:

When He decrees the creation of a thing, He says to it, "Be", and it assumes existence; but not through an audible voice which strikes the ear or a cry that can be heard. Indeed the speech of God, glory be to Him, is but His created Act, which did not exist before [it came into

existence]. Had it (Divine speech) been itself eternal, it would be another god besides Him. (Sermon 186)

In addition, there are other musnad traditions on this subject related from 'Ali ('a), only some of which have been collected in the Nahj al-balaghah, and can be traced back to his time. On this basis, there is no room for doubting their genuineness. If any superficial resemblance is observed between the statements made by 'Ali ('a) and some views held by the Mu'tazilah, the probability to be allowed in this connection is that some of his ideas were adopted by the Mu'tazilah.

The controversies of the Muslim theologians (mutakallimun), both the Shi'ah and the Sunni, the Asha'irah as well as the Mu'tazilah, generally revolved around the doctrine of rational basis of ethical judgement concerning good and evil (al-husn wa al-qubh al-'aqliyyan). This doctrine which is not other than a practical principle operating in human society, is considered by the mutakallimun to be also applicable to the Divine sphere and govern the laws of creation; but we find no trace of it in the Nahj al-balaghah, similarly there is no sign of it in the Quran. Had the ideas and beliefs of the mutakallimun found their way into the Nahj al-balaghah, first of all the traces of this doctrine should have been found in that book.

The Nahj al-balaghah and Philosophical Concepts:

Some others, on coming across certain words such as 'existence' (wujud), 'non-existence' ('adam), 'temporality' (huduth) and 'pre-eternity' (qidam), and so on in the Nahj al-balaghah, have been led to assume that these terms entered the Muslim intellectual world under the influence of Greek philosophy and were inserted, unintentionally or intentionally, into the discourses of 'Ali ('a). If those who advocate this view had gone deeper into the meanings of these words, they would not have paid heed to such a hypothesis. The method and approach adopted in the arguments of the Nahj al-balaghah is completely different from that of the philosophers who lived before al-Sayyid al- Radi or during his time, or even those born many centuries after the compilation of the Nahj al-balalghah .

Presently, we shall not discuss the metaphysics of Greek or Alexandrian (Neo-Platonic) philosophy, but shall confine ourselves to the metaphysical views propounded by al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. Undoubtedly Muslim philosophers brought new problems into philosophy under the influence of Islamic teachings which did not exist before, and in addition to them, introduced radically original ways of demonstration and inference to explain and argue their point with regard to some other problems. Nevertheless, what we learn from the Nahj al-balaghah is obviously different from this approach. My teacher, 'Allamah Tabataba'i, in the preface to his discourse on the traditions of Islamic scholarship, writes:

These statements help in resolving a number of problems in the theological philosophy. Apart

from the fact that Muslims were not acquainted with these notions and they were incomprehensible to the Arabs, basically there is no trace of them in the writings and statements of pre-Islamic philosophers whose books were translated into Arabic, and, similarly, they do not appear in the works of Muslim philosophers, Arab or Persian. These problems remained obscure and unintelligible, and every commentator discussed them according to his own conjecture, until the eleventh century of the Hijrah (17th century A.D.). Only then they were properly understood for the first time- namely, the problem of the True Unity (al-wahdat al-haqqah) of the Necessary Being (wajib al-wujud) (a non-numerical unity); the problem that the proof of the existence of the Necessary Being is identical with the proof of His Unity (since the Necessary Being is Absolute Existence, Him Being implies His Unity); the problem that the Necessary Existent is the known-in-His-Essence (ma'lum bil dhat); that the Necessary Being is known directly without the need of an intermediary, and that the reality of every thing else is known through the Necessary Being, not vice versa ... [7]

The arguments of the early Muslim philosophers like al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, such as the discussions on the Divine Essence and Attributes, such as Unity, Simplicity (basatah), Self-Sufficiency, Knowledge, Power, Will, Providence, and so on, revolve around the conception of the necessity of existence (wujub al-wujud), from which all of them are derived, and the necessity of existence itself is deduced indirectly. In this fashion it is demonstrated that the existence of all possible existents (mumkinat) cannot be explained without assuming the existence of the Necessary Being. Although the argument used for proving the truth of this cannot be called demonstration per impossible (burhan khulf) in view of its indirect mode of inference, it resembles burhan khulf and hence it fails to provide completely satisfactory demonstration, for it does not explain the necessity of existence of the Necessary Being. Ibn Sina in his al-'Isharat claims that he has succeeded in discovering "the Why?" (lima) of it and hence chooses to call his argument "burhan al-siddiqin" (burhan limmi, i.e. causal proof). However, the latter philosophers considered his exposition of "the Why?" (lima) as insufficient.

In the Nahj al-balaghah, necessity of existence is never used to explain the existence of the possible beings (mumkinat). That on which this book relies for this purpose is the real criterion of the necessity of existence, that is, the absolute reality and pure being of the Divine Essence.

'Allamah Tabataba'i, in the above-mentioned work, while explaining a hadith of 'Ali ('a) found in al-Tawhid of al-Shaykh al-Saduq, says:

The basis of our discussion rests upon the principle that Divine Being is a reality that does not accept any limits or restrictions whatsoever. Because, God, the Most Exalted, is Absolute Reality from Whom is derived the existence of all other beings within the ontological limits and characteristics peculiar to themselves, and their existence depends on that of the Absolute

Being. [8]

In the Nahj al-balaghah the very basis of all discussions on Divine Essence rests on the position that God is Absolute and Infinite Being, which transcends all limits and finitude. No point of space or time, nor any thing is devoid of Him. He is with everything, yet no thing is with Him. Since He is the Absolute, and the Infinite, He transcends all time, number, limit and proximity (all kinds of quiddities). That is, time and space, number and limit are applicable to a lower stage i.e. stage of Divine Acts and creation. Everything is from Him and returns unto Him. He is the First of the first and the Last of the last. He precedes everything and succeeds everything.

This is the idea that forms the axis of all discourses of the Nahj al-balaghah, and of which there is no trace in the works of al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazali, and Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi.

As pointed out by 'Allamah Tabataba'i, these profound discussions of theology proper (ilahiyyat bil-ma'na al-'akhass) are based on a series of inter-related problems which have been posited in metaphysics (al-'umur al-'ammah). [9] An elaborate discussion of those theological problems and their relevant issues mentioned above is outside the scope of our present discussion.

There are two reasons for rejecting the claims that the theological discussions of the Nahj al-balaghah were inventions of later writers familiar with philosophical notions. Firstly, the kind of problems discussed in the Nahj al-balaghah were not at all raised by any philosopher till the time of al-Sayyid al-Radi, the compiler of the Nahj al-balaghah. That the Unity of the Necessary Being is not of the numerical kind and that Divine Essence precedes number; that the existence of the Necessary Being implies Its Unity; the simple reality of the Necessary Being; His immanence and other such notions were not known to philosophy during or before al-Sayyid al-Radi's times. Secondly, the axes of arguments presented in this book are altogether different from the axes of philosophical discussions which have been prevalent throughout history until the present day.

The Nahj al-balaghah and Western Philosophic Thought:

The Nahj al-balaghah has played a great role in the history of Eastern Philosophy. Mulla Sadra, who brought a revolution in theological thought (al-hikmat al-'ilahiyyah), was under profound influence of 'Ali's discourses. His method of argument with regard to the problems of tawhid is the method of inferring the Essence from the Essence, and also deducing the Attributes and Acts from the Essence, and all these arguments are based on the belief that there exists the Necessary Being only. These arguments are based on radically different general principles, which are elaborated in his system of metaphysics.

Eastern theological thought (al-hikmat al-'ilahiyyah) attained fruition and strength from the sources of Islamic teachings and was firmly established on unviolable foundations. However, theological philosophy in the West remained deprived of such source of inspiration. The widespread philosophical malaise of inclination towards materialism in the West has many causes whose discussion is outside the scope of our discourse. But we believe that the major cause of this phenomenon is the weakness and insufficiency of theological conceptions of Western religious thought. [10] Anyone interested in making a comparative study of the approaches pointed out in these chapters, should first study the arguments advanced by Western philosophers such as Anselm, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant and others for proving the existence of God and their discussions about acceptance or rejection of various arguments, then he should compare them with the burhan al-siddiqin argument advanced by Mulla Sadra under the inspiration of 'Ali's words. He would see for himself the wide chasm that separates the one from the other.

Notes:

[1] The term ta'wil has been defined variously, but generally when used in the opposition to tafsir (which is applied to the explanation of the literal and explicit meanings of the Quranic texts) it is applied to interpretation of the Quranic verses which goes beyond their literal meaning. According to Imamiyyah Shi'ah, no one except the Prophet (S) and the twelve Imams (A) is entitled to draw tawil of the Quranic verses. To illustrate what is meant by ta'wil consider these examples: (1) According to Shi'ah hadith, the verse 2:158, Where ever you maybe, God will bring you all together', pertains to the 313 companions of al Imam al Mahdi (A) whom God will gather in a certain place from various parts of the earth in a single night. (2) According to another hadith the verse 67:30, 'Say: What think you? If your water (in wells) should have vanished into the earth, then who would bring you running water?' pertains to the ghaybah (occultation) of al Imam al Mahdi (A). Such interpretations, which obviously go beyond the apparent meaning of the Quranic verses, are called ta'wil.

[2] Allamah S.M.H Tabatabai, Usul e falsafah wa rawish e riyalism (The Principles and Method of Philosophy of Realism), Introduction to vol. I

[3] Muhammad Sulayman Nadawi, Madha khasara al alam bi inhitat al Muslimin, vol. IV, p. 97

[4] Ibid., p. 135

[5] Allamah Tabatabai, op. Cit

[6] Ibid, vol. V

[7] Maktab e tashayyu, No. 2 p. 120

[8] Ibid, p. 126

[9] Ibid, p. 157

[10] See Murtada Mutahhari, Ilal e garayesh beh maddigari (The causes of inclination towards Materialism), under the chapter: Naresa iha ye mafahi me falsafiI (The inadequacies of [Western] Philosophical Ideas)

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Al-Tawhid

The Glimpses of Nahj al Balaghah

Part III - Suluk and 'Ibadah

Murtadha Mutahhari

Translated from Persian by Ali Quli Qara'i

'Ibadah, or service, of the One God and negation of everything else as an object of service and worship, is one of the essential teachings of God-sent apostles-a feature never absent from the teachings of any prophet. As we know, in the sacred religion of Islam, too, worship occupies a preeminent position, with the only difference that worship in Islam is not regarded as a series of devotional rituals separate from everyday life and as pertaining solely to another world. Worship in Islam is located in the context of life and is an unalienable part of the Islamic philosophy of life.

Aside from the fact that some of the Islamic acts of worship are performed collectively, Islam has structured them in such a fashion that their performance automatically ensures the performance of other duties of life. For instance, salat is a complete expression of man's servitude and surrender to God. It has been specified in such a manner that even a man who desires to pray in a lonely corner is forced to observe certain things of moral and social relevance, such as cleanliness, respect for rights of others, observance of punctuality, possession of a sense of direction, control over one's emotions, and expression of good-will and benevolence towards other righteous servants of God.

From the point of view of Islam, every good and beneficial action if performed with a pure, God-seeking intention, is viewed as worship. Therefore, learning, acquisition of knowledge and livelihood and social service, if performed for God's sake, are acts of worship. Nevertheless, Islam also specifies a system of rituals and formal acts of worship such as salat, sawm (fasting) etc., which have a specific philosophy for performing them.

Levels of Worship:

Men have varying attitudes towards worship. Not all of them view it in the same light. For some, worship is a kind of deal, a barter and an exchange of labour performed for wages. Like an ordinary worker who spends his time and labour for the benefit of an employer and expects a daily wage in return, the devotee also endeavours for the sake of Divine reward, which, however, he would receive in the next world. Like the labourer, for whom his labour bears fruit in the form of his wages and who would not work except for a wage, the benefit of the devotee's worship, according to the outlook of this particular group of devotees, lies in the wages and reward which shall be granted to the devotees in the shape of the goods and comforts in the other world.

However, every employer pays wages in return for the benefit he derives from his workers, but what benefit can the Lord of the heavens derive from the labours of a weak and feeble servant? Moreover, if we assume that the Great Employer does remunerate His servants in the form of the blessings and rewards of the Hereafter, then why does He not reward them without any effort and consumption of labour and energy? These are questions which never occur to this class of pious. From their viewpoint, the essence of worship lies in certain visible bodily movements and oscillations of the tongue. This is one attitude towards worship. Unrefined and vulgar it be, it is, in the words of Ibn Sina, as he puts it in the ninth chapter of His al-'Isharat, 'the attitude of the unenlightened and God-ignorant, acceptable only to the plebeians.'

Another approach towards worship is that of the enlightened. Here the aforementioned problems of worker and employer, labour and wage, have no relevance. How can they be relevant when worship is viewed by them as the ladder to attain nearness to God, as the means of human sublimity, edification and upliftment of the soul and its flight to the invisible sphere of spiritual greatness, as an invigorating exercise of his spiritual faculties, and as a triumph of the spirit over the corporeal? It is the highest expression of the gratitude and love of the human being towards his Creator and his declaration of love for the Most Perfect and the Absolutely Beautiful, and finally, his wayfaring towards Allah!

According to this approach, worship has a form and a soul, an appearance and an inner meaning. That which is expressed by the tongue and the movements of other members of the body, is the form, the outer mould, and the appearance of worship. Its soul and meaning is something else. The soul of worship is inextricably connected with the significance attached to worship by the devotee, his attitude towards it, his inner motive that drives him to it, the ultimate satisfaction and benefit he derives from it, and the extent to which he covers the Divine path in his journey towards God.

The Approach of the Nahj al-balaghah:

What approach and attitude is adopted by the Nahj al-balaghah towards worship? The Nahj al-balaghah takes an enlightened view of worship, or rather, it is, after the Holy Quran and the

Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ('s), the main source of inspiration towards the enlightened approach to worship in the Islamic tradition.

As we know, of the most sublime and imaginative themes of Islamic literature, both Arabic and Persian, is relationship between the ardent love of the devotee for the Divine Essence expressed in delicate and elegant passages in the form of sermons, prayers, allegories, parables, both in prose and verse. When we compare them with the pre-Islamic notions prevalent in the regions which subsequently constituted the domains of Islam, it is surprising to observe the gigantic leap that was taken by Islam in bestowing depth, scope, sweetness, and delicacy to human thought. Islam transformed a people who worshipped idols, images, fire, or degraded the Eternal God to the level of a human 'Father', and whose flight of imagination prompted them to identify the 'Father' with the 'Son', or who officially considered the Ahura Mazda to be a material form, whose statues they erected in every place, into a people whose intellect could grasp and evolve the most abstract of concepts, the most sophisticated ideas, the most elegant thoughts and most sublime notions.

How was human intellect so radically transformed? What revolutionized their logic, elevated their thoughts, refined their emotions and sublimated their values? How did it happen? The al-Mu'allaqat al-sab'ah and the Nahj al-balaghah stand only one generation apart. Both of those generations of Arabs were proverbial in eloquence and literary genius. But as to the content, they stand as far apart as the earth and the sky. The former sing of the beauty of the beloved, the pleasures of love, of gallantry, horses, spears, nightly assaults, and compose eulogy and lampoon; the latter contains the sublimest ideas of man.

In order to elucidate the approach of 'Ali ('a) towards worship, now we shall proceed to cite few examples from the Nahj al-balaghah, beginning with a statement about the differences in various approaches of people towards worship.

The Worship of Freemen:

A group of people worshipped God out of desire for reward; this is the worship of traders. Another group worshipped God out of fear; this is the worship of slaves. Yet another group worshipped God out of gratitude; this is the worship of freemen. [1]

Even if God had not warned those disobedient to Him of chastisement, it was obligatory by way of gratefulness for His favours that He should not be disobeyed. [2]

My God, I have not worshipped Thee out of fear of Thy Hell and out of greed for Thy Paradise; but I found Thee worthy of worship, and so I worshipped Thee. [3]

God's Remembrance:

The roots of all spiritual, moral, and social aspects of worship lie in one thing: the remembrance of God and obliviousness towards everything else. In one of its verses, the Holy Quran refers to the educative and invigorating effect of worship, and says:

The salat protects from unseemly acts. (29:45)

Adhere to salat in order that you remain in My remembrance. (20:14)

This is a reminder of the fact that the person who prays remembers God and lives by the knowledge that He is always observing and watching him, and does not forget that he himself is His servant.

The remembrance of God, which is the aim of worship, is burnishing of the heart and an agency of its purification. It prepares the heart for the reflection of Divine Light in it. Speaking of the remembrance of God and the meaning of worship, 'Ali ('a) says:

Certainly God, the glorified, has made His remembrance burnishing of the hearts, which makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness, and makes them submissive after unruliness. In all periods and times when there were no prophets, there were individuals to whom He spoke in whispers through their conscience and intellects. [4]

These sentences speak of the wonderful effect of Divine remembrance on the heart, to the extent of making it capable of receiving Divine inspiration and bringing it in intimate communion with God.

Levels of Devotion:

In the same sermon are explained the various spiritual states and levels attained by the worshippers in the course of their devotional search. 'Ali ('a) describes such men in these words:

The angels have surrounded them and peace is showered upon them. The doors of heavens are opened for them and abodes of blessedness, of which He had informed them, have been prepared for them. He is pleased with their struggle and admires their station. When they call Him, they breathe the scent of His forgiveness and mercy. [5]

Nights of the Devout:

From the point of view of the Nahj al-balaghah, the world of worship is another world altogether. Its delights are not comparable with any pleasures of the three-dimensional corporeal world. The world of worship effuses movement, progress, and journey, but a

journey which is quite unlike physical travel to new lands. It is spiritual journey to the 'nameless city'. It does not know night from the day, because it is always drenched in light. In it there is no trace of darkness and pain, for it is throughout purity, sincerity, and delight. Happy is the man, in the view of the Nahj al-balaghah, who sets his foot into this world and is refreshed by its invigorating breeze. Such a man then no longer cares whether he lays his head on silken pillow or on a stone:

Blessed is he who discharges his duties towards his Lord, and endures the hardships they entail. He allows himself no sleep at nights until it over whelms him. Then lies down with the palm of his hand under head as his pillow. He is among those whom the thought of the Day of Judgement keeps wakeful at nights, whose beds remain vacant, whose lips hum in God's remembrance and whose sins have been erased by their prolonged earnest supplication for forgiveness They are the 'Party of God'; "surely God's Party-they are the prosperers!" [6]

The nights of the men of God are like shiny days,

The gloomy nights do not exist for the enlightened.

The Profile of the Pious:

In the last section we discussed the viewpoint of the Nahj al-balaghah with respect to worship. We found that the Nahj al-balaghah does not regard worship as a series of cut-and-dried, lifeless rituals. The bodily movements constitute the apparent body of worship, while its soul and meaning is something else. Only when endowed with meaning and spirit is worship worth its name. Real worship means transcending the three-dimensional world into the spiritual sphere, which is a world of perpetual delight and sublimation for the soul and the source of vigour and strength for the heart, which has its own pleasures.

There are many references to the characteristics of the pious and the devout in the Nahj al-balaghah. Often the Nahj al-balaghah sketches the profiles of the pious and the devout and describes their characteristic fear of God, their devotion and delight in worship, their constant sorrow and grief over sins and frequent reciting of the Quran, and their occasional ecstatic experiences and states which they achieve in the course of their worshipful endeavours and struggle against their corporeal self. At times it discusses the role of worship in lifting from the human soul the pall of sins and black deeds, and often points out to the effect of worship in curing moral and psychic diseases. At other times it speaks about the unadulterated, unsurpassable and pure delights and ecstasies of the followers of the spiritual path and sincere worshippers of God.

Night Vigils:

During the night they are on their feet reciting the verses of the Quran one after the other, tarrying to deliberate about their meaning, and thereby instilling gnostic pathos into their souls and by means of it seek remedy for their spiritual ailments. What they hear from the Quran seems to them as if they are witnessing it with their own eyes. If they come across a verse arousing eagerness (for Paradise) they lean towards it covetingly and their souls cling to it avidly as if they are approaching their ultimate goal. And when they come across a verse that instills fear, their heart's ear is turned in attention to it as if they themselves hear the cracking sound of the flames of Hell Fire. Their backs are bent in reverence and their foreheads, palms, knees and toes rest on the ground as they beseech God for deliverance. But when the day dawns, they are kind, patient, scholarly, pious and righteous. [7]

The Spiritual Experience:

He has revived his intellect and slain his self, until his body became lean and its bulkiness shrunk, and stubborness turned into tenderness (of heart). Then an effulgence, like a thunderbolt, descended his heart and illuminated the path before him, opening all the doors, and led him straight into the gateway of Peace. Now his feet, carrying his body, are firmly rooted in the position of safety (on the Sirat) and comfort because he kept his heart busy with good deeds and won the good pleasure of his God. [8]

As we observe, this passage speaks of another kind of life, which is called 'the life of intellect'. It speaks about struggle against the carnal self (al-nafs al-'ammarah) and its destruction; it speaks about exercise of the spirit and the body, about lightening, which as a result of exercise illumines the being of the follower and brightens his spiritual world; it speaks about the stages and targets that the devotee's earnest soul reaches on his way until it attains the last and highest stage of man's spiritual journey. The Quran says:

O man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him. (84:6)

'Ali ('a), in the passage cited above, speaks about the inner peace, contentment and tranquillity of soul which a man's restless, disturbed and anxious heart ultimately attains:

Indeed, the hearts are at rest in God 's remembrance. (13:28)

In the sermon 228, 'Ali ('a) describes the significance attached by this class of devotees to spiritual life-the life of the heart:

They see that the worldly people attach great importance to the death of their bodies but they themselves attach much greater importance to the death of hearts of those who are living. (Sermon 230)

'Ali ('a) describes the ecstatic eagerness of the earnest souls which impels them to move

onwards on the path of spiritual perfection in these words:

They lived in society and participated in its affairs with their bodies, while their souls rested in the higher spiritual spheres. [10]

Had there been no preordained time of death for each of them, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of their eagerness for the Divine reward and their fear of chastisement. [11]

He did everything only for God, and so God also made him His own. [12]

The esoteric knowledge and emanated insight, revealed to the heart of the follower of the spiritual path as a result of self-education and self-refinement, is described in these words:

The knowledge that bursts upon them and surrounds them is endowed with absolute certainty, and their soul attains the highest degree of conviction. They easily bear what the easy-going regard as harsh and unbearable. They endear what makes the ignorant recoil with horror. [13]

Purging of Sins:

From the point of view of Islamic teachings, every sin leaves a black stain and the effects of distortion in the human heart which in turn weakens a person's aptitude for good and righteous actions, and consequently further deviates him towards other sins and foul deeds. On the other hand, worship, prayer and remembrance of God, develop a human being's religious consciousness, strengthen his aptitude for virtuous deeds and diminish his proneness to sin. This means that worship and remembrance of God efface the mal-effects of sins and replace these with fondness for virtue and goodness.

In the Nahj al-balaghah there is a sermon which deals with salat, zakat and delivering of trust; after emphasizing the importance of salat, 'Ali ('a) further says:

Certainly, prayer removes sins like autumn strips leaves off from trees, and it liberates you from the rope (of sins) tied around your neck. The Prophet ('s) likened it to a refreshing stream at one's door in which one takes a purifying bath five times in a day and night. Will after so much cleansing any dirt remain on him? [14]

Moral Remedy:

In the sermon 196, after referring to evil conduct such as disobedience, oppression, injustice and pride, 'Ali ('a) says:

It is on account of these perils that God has encouraged His believing servants to perform salat and zakat, to keep fast during the days when it is made obligatory; these acts of worship give their limbs peace and rest, cast fear in their eyes, soften their spirits, cultivate a sense of humility in their hearts and purge them from pride.

Intimacy and Ecstasy:

My God, Thou, of all beloved ones, art the most attached to Thy lovers and most ready to trust those who trust in Thee. Thou seest, Thou lookest into their secrets and knowest that which lies in their conscience and art aware of the extent of their inner vision. Consequently their secrets are open to Thee and their hearts look up to Thee in eager apprehension. In loneliness, Thy remembrance is their friend and consolation. In distress Thy help is their protection. [15]

There are some people devoted to remembrance of Allah who have chosen it in place of all worldly goods. [16]

In the sermon 148, 'Ali ('a) alludes to the coming times of the Promised al-Mahdi ('a)-may God hasten his appearance-and at the end of his discourse describes the courage, wisdom, insight and

Then a group of people will be made ready by God like the swords sharpened by the blacksmith. Their sight would be brightened by revelations the inner meaning of the Quran would be familiar to their ears and they would be given to drink the cup of wisdom every morning and evening. [17]

Notes:

[1] Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. 237

[2] Ibid, Hikam, No. 290

[3] Source of reference not indicated (Tr.)

[4] Ibid,. Khutab, No. 222

[5] Ibid,. p. 343

[6] Ibid,. Rasail, No. 45

[7] Ibid,. Khutab, No. 193

[8] Ibid,. Khutab No. 220

[9] Ibid, Khutab No. 230

[10] Ibid, Hikam, No. 147

[11] Ibid, Khutab No. 193

[12] Ibid, Khutab No. 87

[13] Ibid, Hikam, No. 147

[14] Ibid, Khutab No.199

[15] Ibid, Khutab No.227

[16] Ibid, Khutab No.222

[17] Ibid, Khutab No.150

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Al-Tawhid

The Glimpses of Nahj al Balaghah

Murtadha Mutahhari

Transl. from Persian by Ali Quli Qara'i

The Nahj al-balaghah on State:

One of the frequently discussed issues in the Nahj al-balaghah is that of government and justice. To anyone who goes through the book, it is evident to what extent 'Ali ('a) is sensitive to the issues related to government and justice. He considers them to be of paramount importance. For those who lack an understanding of Islam but have knowledge of the teachings of other religions, it is astonishing why a religious personage should devote himself to this sort of problems. Don't such problems relate to the world and worldly life'! Shouldn't a sage keep aloof from the matters of the world and society? They wonder.

On the other hand, such a thing is not at all surprising for one acquainted with the teachings of Islam and the details of 'Ali's life; that 'Ali was brought up from childhood by the Holy Prophet of Islam, that the Prophet ('s), having taken him from his father as a child, had reared him in his home under his own care, that the Prophet ('s) had trained 'Ali ('a) and instructed him in his own characteristic way, teaching him the secrets of Islam. 'Ali's spirit had assimilated within itself the doctrines of Islam and the code of its laws. Therefore, it is not strange that 'Ali should have been such; rather it would have been astonishing if he wasn't such as we find him to be. Doesn't the Quran declare:

Indeed, We sent Our messengers with the clear signs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that men might uphold justice ... (57:25)

In this verse, establishment of justice has been declared as being the objective of the mission of all the prophets. The sanctity of justice is so stressed that it is considered the aim of all prophetic missions. Hence, how were it possible that someone like 'Ali ('a), whose duty was

to expound the teachings of the Quran and explain the doctrines and laws of Islam, might have ignored this issue or, at least, accorded it a secondary importance?

Those who neglect these issues in their teachings, or imagine that these problems are only of marginal significance and that the central issues are those of ritual purity and impurity (taharah and najasah), it is essential that they should re-examine their own beliefs and views.

The Importance of Politics:

The first thing which must be examined is the significance and value attached to the issue of government and justice by the Nahj al-balaghah. Indeed, what is essentially the importance of these problems in Islam? A thorough discussion of this question is obviously outside the scope of this book, but a passing reference, however, seems inevitable. The Holy Quran, in the verse where it commands the Prophet ('s) to inform the people that 'Ali ('a) would succeed him as the leader of the Muslims and the Prophet's khalifah, declares with extraordinary insistence

O Messenger communicate that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord; for if thou dost not, thou will not have delivered His Message ! (5:67)

Is there any other issue in Islam to which this much importance was attached? What other issue is of such significance that if not communicated to the people should amount to the failure of the prophetic mission itself?

During the battle of Uhud, when the Muslims were defeated and the rumour spread that the Holy Prophet ('s) had been killed, a group of the Muslims fled from the battlefield. Referring to this incident, the Quran says:

Muhammad is naught but a Messenger; Messengers have passed away before him. Why, if he should die or is slain, will you turn about on your heels? (3:144) '

Allamah Tabataba'i, in an article entitled Wilayat wa-hakumat, derives the following conclusion from the above verse: 'If the Messenger ('s) is killed in battle, it should not in any way stall, even temporarily, your struggle. Immediately afterwards, you should place yourselves under the banner of the successor to the Prophet ('s), and continue your endeavour. In other words, if, supposedly, the Prophet ('s) is killed or if he dies, the social system and military organization of the Muslims should not disintegrate.'

There is a hadith, according to which the Prophet ('s) said: "If (as few as) three persons go on a journey, they must appoint one out of themselves as their leader." From this one may infer to what extent the Prophet regarded as harmful the disorder and absence of an authority that could resolve social conflicts and serve as a unifying bond among individuals.

The Nahj al-balaghah deals with numerous problems concerning the State and social justice, a few of which, God willing, we shall discuss here.

The first problem to be discussed here is that of the necessity and value of a State. 'Ali ('a) has repeatedly stressed the need for a powerful government, and, in his own time, battled against the views propagated by the Khawarij, who, in the beginning, denied the need for a State, considering the Quran as sufficient. The slogan of the Khawarij as is known was "The right of judgement (or authority to rule) is exclusively God's" (la hukm illa li-Allah), a phrase adopted from the holy Quran. Its Quranic meaning is that the prerogative of legislation belongs to God or those whom God has permitted to legislate. But the Khawarij interpreted it differently. According to 'Ali ('a), they had imparted a false sense to a true statement. The essence of their view was that no human being possesses any right to rule others; sovereignty belongs exclusively to God. 'Ali's argument was:

Yes, I also say la hukm illa li-Allah, in the sense that the right of legislation belongs solely to God. But their claim that the prerogative to govern and lead also belongs to God is not reasonable. After all, the laws of God need to be implemented by human beings. Men cannot do without a ruler, good or evil.[1] It is under the protection of a State that the believers strive for God's sake, and the unbelievers derive material benefit from their worldly endeavours, and men attain the fruits of their labours. It is through the authority of State that taxes are collected, aggressors are repelled, the security of highways is maintained, and the weak reclaim their rights (through courts of law) from the strong. (This process continues) until the good citizens are happy and secure from the evils of miscreants. (Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab 40)

'Ali ('a), like other godly men and spiritual leaders, despises temporal power and political office for being lowly and degrading when an instrument of gratification of lust for power and political ambition. He looks down upon it with extreme contempt when it is desired as an end-in-itself and aspired as an ideal of life. He considers such kind of power to be devoid of any value and considers it to be more detestable than 'a pig's bone in a leper's hand.' But the same power and leadership if used as a means for the establishment and execution of social justice and service to society is regarded by him as a thing of paramount sanctity, for which he is willing to fight any opportunist and political adventurer seeking to grab power and illegitimate wealth. In its defence, he does not hesitate to draw his sword against plunderers and usurpers.

During the days of 'Ali's caliphate, 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas once came to him. He found 'Ali mending his old shoes with his own hand. Turning to Ibn al-'Abbas, 'Ali asked him, "How much do you think is this shoe worth?" "Nothing," replied Ibn al-'Abbas. 'Ali said, "But the same shoe is of more worth to me than authority over you if it were not to me a means for establishing justice, recovering the rights of the deprived, and wiping out evil

practices." (Khutab 33)

In the sermon 216, we come across a general discussion about human rights and duties. Here, 'Ali states that every right always involves two parties. Of the various Divine duties the ones which God has ordained are duties of people towards people; they are framed in such a way that each right necessitates a duty towards others; each right which benefits an individual or a group, holds the individual or group responsible to fulfil some duty towards others. Every duty becomes binding when the other party also fulfils his duty. He says further regarding this issue:

But the most important of the reciprocal rights that God has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the subjects and the rights of the subjects over the ruler. It is a mutual and reciprocal obligation decreed by God for them. He has made it the basis of the strength of their society and their religion. Consequently, the subjects cannot prosper unless the rulers are righteous. The rulers cannot be righteous unless the subjects are firm and steadfast. If the subjects fulfil their duties toward the ruler and the ruler his duty to them, then righteousness prevails amongst them. Only then the objectives of the religion are realized, the pillars of justice become stable and wholesome traditions become established. In this way, better conditions of life and social environment emerge. The people become eager to safeguard the integrity of the State, and thus frustrate the plots of its enemies. (Khutab 126)

Justice, a Supreme Value:

The first consequence of the sacred teachings of Islam was the influence exercised on the minds and ideas of its adherents. Not only did Islam introduce new teachings regarding the world, man, and his society, but also changed the ways of thinking. The importance of the latter achievement is not less than the former.

Every teacher imparts new knowledge to his pupils and every school of thought furnishes new information to its adherents. But the teachers and schools of thought who furnish their followers with a new logic and revolutionize their ways of thinking altogether, are few.

But how do the ways of thinking change and one logic replaces another? This requires some elucidation.

Man by virtue of being a rational creature thinks rationally on scientific and social issues. His arguments, intentionally or unintentionally, are based on certain principles and axioms. All his conclusions are drawn and judgements are based on them. The difference in ways of thinking originates precisely in these first principles or axioms, used as the ground of inferences and conclusions. Here it is crucial what premises and axioms form the foundation for inference, and here lies the cause of all disparity in inferences and conclusions. In every age there is a close similarity between the ways of thinking of those familiar with the

intellectual spirit of the age on scientific issues. However, the difference is conspicuous between the intellectual spirits of different ages. But in regard to social problems, such a similarity and consensus is not found even among persons who are contemporaries. There is a secret behind this, to expound which would take us outside the scope of the present discussion.

Man, in his confrontation with social and moral problems, is inevitably led to adopt some sort of value-orientation. In his estimations he arrives at a certain hierarchy of values in which he arranges all the issues. This order or hierarchy of values plays a significant role in the adoption of the kind of basic premises and axioms he utilizes. It makes him think differently from others who have differently evaluated the issues and have arrived at a different hierarchy of values. This is what leads to disparity among ways of thinking. Take for example the question of feminine chastity, which is a matter of social significance. Do all people prescribe a similar system of evaluation with regard to this issue? Certainly not. There is a great amount of disparity between views. For some its significance is near zero and it plays no part in their thinking. For some the matter is of utmost value. Such persons regard life as worthless in an environment where feminine chastity is regarded as unimportant.

When we say that Islam revolutionized the ways of thinking, what is meant is that it drastically altered their system and hierarchy of values. It elevated values like taqwa (God-fearing), which had no value at all in the past, to a very high status and attached an unprecedented importance to it. On the other hand, it deflated the value of such factors as blood, race and the like, which in the pre-Islamic days were of predominant significance, bringing their worth to zero. Justice is one of the values revived by Islam and given an extraordinary status. It is true that Islam recommended justice and stressed its implementation, but what is very significant is that it elevated its value in society. It is better to leave the elaboration of this point to 'Ali ('a) himself, and see what the Nahj al-balaghah says. A man of intelligence and understanding puts the following question to Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a):

Which is superior, justice or generosity? (Hikam 437)

Here the question is about two human qualities. Man has always detested oppression and injustice and has also held in high regard acts of kindliness and benevolence performed without the hope of reward or return. Apparently the answer to the above question seems both obvious and easy: generosity is superior to justice, for what is justice except observance of the rights of others and avoiding violating them; but a generous man willingly foregoes his own right in favour of another person. The just man does not transgress the rights of others or he safeguards their rights from being violated. But the generous man sacrifices his own right for another's sake. Therefore, generosity must be superior to justice.

In truth, the above reasoning appears to be quite valid when we estimate their worth from the

viewpoint of individual morality, and generosity, more than justice, seems to be the sign of human perfection and the nobleness of the human soul. But 'Ali's reply is contrary to the above answer. 'Ali ('a) gives two reasons for superiority of justice over generosity. Firstly he says:

Justice puts things in their proper place and generosity diverts them from their (natural) direction.

For, the meaning of justice is that the natural deservedness of everybody must be taken into consideration; everyone should be given his due according to his work, ability and qualifications. Society is comparable to a machine whose every part has a proper place and function.

It is true that generosity is a quality of great worth from the point of view that the generous man donates to another what legitimately belongs to himself, but we must note that it is an unnatural occurrence. It may be compared to a body one of whose organs is malfunctioning, and its other healthy organs and members temporarily redirect their activity to the recovery of the suffering organ. From the point of view of society, it would be far more preferable if the society did not possess such sick members at all, so that the healthy organs and members may completely devote their activities and energies to the general growth and perfection of society, instead of being absorbed with helping and assisting of some particular member.

To return to 'Ali's reply, the other reason he gives for preferring justice to generosity is this:

Justice is the general caretaker, whereas generosity is a particular reliever.

That is, justice is like a general law which is applicable to the management of all the affairs of society. Its benefit is universal and all-embracing; it is the highway which serves all and everyone. But generosity is something exceptional and limited, which cannot be always relied upon. Basically, if generosity were to become a general rule, it would no longer be regarded as such. Deriving his conclusion, Ali ('a) says:

Consequently, justice is the nobler of the two and possesses the greater merit. This way of thinking about man and human problems is one based on a specific value system rooted in the idea of the fundamental importance of society. In this system of values, social principles and criteria precede the norms of individual morality. The former is a principle, whereas the latter is only a ramification. The former is a trunk, while the latter is a branch of it. The former is the foundation of the structure, whereas the latter is an embellishment.

From 'Ali's viewpoint, it is the principle of justice that is of crucial significance in preserving the balance of society, and winning goodwill of the public. Its practice can ensure the health of society and bring peace to its soul. Oppression, injustice and discrimination cannot bring

peace and happiness-even to the tyrant or the one in whose interest the injustice is perpetrated. Justice is like a public highway which has room for all and through which everyone may pass without impediment. But injustice and oppression constitute a blind alley which does not lead even the oppressor to his desired destination.

As is known, during his caliphate, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan put a portion of the public property of the Muslims at the disposal of his kinsmen and friends. After the death of 'Uthman, 'Ali ('a) assumed power. 'Ali ('a) was advised by some to overlook whatever injustices had occurred in the past and to do nothing about them, confining his efforts to what would befall from then on during his own caliphate. But to this his reply was:

A long standing right does not become invalid!

Then he exclaimed: "By God, even if I find that by such misappropriated money women have been married or slave-maids have been bought, I would reclaim it and have it returned to the public treasury, because:

There is a wide scope and room in the dispensation of justice. [Justice is vast enough to include and envelop everyone;] he who [being of a diseased temperament] finds restriction and hardship in justic should know that the path of injustice and oppression is harder and even more restricted. (Khutab 15)

Justice, according to this conception, is a barrier and limit to be observed, respected, and believed in by every person. All should be content to remain within its limits. But if its limits are broken and violated, and the belief in it and respect for it are lost, human greed and lust, being insatiable by nature, would not stop at any limit; the further man advances on this interminable journey of greed and lust, the greater becomes his dissatisfaction.

Indifference to Injustice

'Ali ('a) regards justice to be a duty and a Divine trust; rather, to him it is a Divine sanctity. He does not expect a Muslim who is aware and informed about the teachings of Islam to be an idle spectator at the scenes of injustice and discrimination.

In the sermon called 'al-Shiqshiqiyyah', after relating the pathetic political episodes of the past, 'Ali ('a) proceeds to advance his reasons for accepting the caliphate. He mentions how, after the assassination of 'Uthman, the people thronged around him urging him to accept the leadership of Muslims. But 'Ali ('a), after the unfortunate events of the past and being aware of the extent of deterioration in the prevailing situation, was not disposed to accept that grave responsibility. Neverthe less, he saw that should he reject the caliphate, the face of truth would become still more clouded, and it might be alleged that he was not interested in this matter from the very beginning, and that he gave no importance to such affairs. Moreover, in

view of the fact that Islam does not consider it permissible for anyone to remain an idle spectator in a society divided into two classes of the oppressed and the oppressor, one suffering the pangs of hunger and the other well-fed and uneasy with the discomforts of over-eating, there was no alternative for 'Ali ('a) but to shoulder this heavy responsibility. He himself explains this in the aforementioned sermon:

(By Him who split the grain and created living things,) had it not been for the presence of the pressing crowd, were it not for the establishment of (God's) testimony upon me through the existence of supporters, and had it not been for the pledge of God with the learned, to the effect that they should not connive with the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have cast the reins of [the camel of] the caliphate on its own shoulders and would have made the last one drink from the same cup that I made the first one to drink (i.e. I would have taken the same stance towards the caliphate as at the time of the first caliph). (Then you would have seen that in my view the world of yours is not worth more than a goat's sneeze.) (Khutab 3)

Justice Should not be Compromised:

Favouritism, nepotism, partiality and shutting up of mouths by big morsels, have always been the essential tools of politicians. Now a man had assumed power and captained the ship of the caliphate who profoundly detested these things. In fact his main objective was to struggle and fight against this kind of politics. Naturally, with the very inception of 'Ali's reign, the politicians with their hopes and expectations were disappointed. Their disappointment soon grew into subversive conspiracies against 'Ali's government, creating for him many a headache. Well-meaning friends, with sincere goodwill, advised 'Ali ('a) to adopt greater flexibility in his policies for the sake of higher interests. Their advice was: "Extricate yourself from the ruses of these demagogues, as is said, 'sewing the dog's mouth with a big morsel'. These are influential persons, some of whom are from the elite of the early days of Islam. Presently, your real enemy is Mu'awiyah, who is in control of a rich and fertile province like Syria. The wisdom lies in setting aside, for the time being, the matter of equality and justice. What harm there is in it?"

'Ali ('a) replied to them:

Do you ask me to seek support through injustice [to my subjects and to saerifice justiee for the sake of political advantage]? By God! I will not do it as long as the world lasts and one star follows another in the sky [i.e. I will not do it as long as the order of the universe exists]. Even if it were my own property I would distribute it with justice, and why not when it is the property of God and when I am His trustee? (Khutab 126)

This is an example of how highly 'Ali valued justice and what status it held in his opinion.

The Rights of the People:

The needs of a human being are not summarized in the phrase 'food, clothing, and housing.' It may be possible to keep an animal happy by satisfying all its bodily needs; but in the case of man, spiritual and psychological factors are as important as the physical ones. Different governments following a similar course in providing for the material welfare of the public might achieve differing results, because one of them fulfils the psychological needs of society while the other doesn't.

One of the pivotal factors which contribute to the securing of the goodwill of the masses is the way a government views them, if it regards them as its slaves or as its masters and guardians, if it considers the people as possessing legitimate rights and itself only as their trustee, agent, and representative. In the first case, whatever service a government may perform for the people is not more than a kind of the master's care of his beast. In the second case, every service performed is equivalent to discharging of duty by a right trustee. A State's acknowledgement of the authentic rights of the people and avoidance of any kind of action that implies negation of their right of sovereignty, are the primary conditions for securing their confidence and goodwill.

The Church and the Right of Sovereignty:

At the dawn of the modern age there was a movement against religion in Europe, which also affected more or less other regions outside the Christendom. This movement was inclined towards materialism. When we examine the causes and roots of this movement, we discover that one of them was the inadequacy of the teachings of the Church from the viewpoint of political rights.The Church authorities, and some European philosophers, developed an artificial relationship and association between belief in God on the one hand and stripping the people of their political rights by despotic regimes on the other.

Naturally, this led to the assumption of some necessary relation between democracy on the one hand and atheism on the other. It came to be believed that either we should choose the belief in God and accept the right of sovereignty bestowed by Him upon certain individuals who have otherwise no superiority over others, or deny the existence of God so as to establish our right as masters of our own political destinies. From the point of view of religious psychology, one of the causes of the decline of the influence of religion was the contradiction between religion and a natural social need, contrived by religious authorities, especially at a time when that need expressed itself strongly at the level of public consciousness. Right at a time when despotism and repression had reached their peak in European political life and the people were thirstily cherishing the ideas of liberty and people's sovereignty, the Church and its supporters made an assertion that the people had only duties and responsibilities towards the State and had no rights. This was sufficient to turn the lovers of liberty and democracy against religion and God in general and the Church in particular.

This mode of thought, in the West as well as in the East, was deeply rooted from ancient times. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in The Social Contract, writes:

We are told by Philo, the Emperor Caligula argued, concluding, reasonably enough on this same analogy, that kings were gods or alternately that the people were animals.

During the Middle Ages,this out look was revived again; since it assumed the status of religious faith, it induced a revolt against religion itself. Rousseau, in the same book, writes:

Grotius denies that all human government is established for the benefit of the governed, and he cites the example of slavery. His characteristic method of reasoning is always to offer fact as a proof of right. It is possible to imagine a more logical method, but not one more favourable to tyrants. According to Grotius, therefore, it is doubtful whether humanity belongs to a hundred men, or whether these hundred men belong to humanity, though he seems throughout his book to lean to the first of these views, which is also that of Hobbes. These authors show us the human race divided into herds of cattle, each with a master who presents it only in order to devour its members. [2]

Rousseau, who calls such a right 'the right of might' (right=force), replies to this logic in this fashion:

'Obey those in power.' If this means 'yield to force' the precept is sound, but superfluous; it has never, I suggest, been violated. All power comes from God, I agree; but so does every disease, and no one forbids us to summon a physician. If I am held up by a robber at the edge of a wood, force compels me to hand over my purse. But if I could somehow contrive to keep the purse from him, would I still be obliged in conscience to surrender it? After all, the pistol in the robber's hand is undoubtedly a power. [3]

Hobbes, whose views have been referred to above, although he does not incline to God in his totalitarian logic, the basis of his philosophic position regarding political rights is that the sovereign represents and personifies the will of the people and he actually translates the will of the people itself into his actions. However, when we closely examine his reasoning, we find that he has been influenced by the ideas of the Church. Hobbes claims that individual liberty is not contrary to unlimited power of the sovereign. He writes:

Nevertheless we are not to understand that by such liberty the sovereign power of life and death is either abolished or limited. For it has been already shown that nothing the sovereign representative can do to a subject, on what pretence soever, can properly be called injustice or injury, because every subject is the author of every act the sovereign does, so that he never wants right to anything otherwise than as he himself is the subject of God and bound thereby to obscene the laws of nature. And therefore it may and does often happen in commonwealths

that a subject may be put to death by the command of the sovereign power and yet neither do the other wrong-as when Jephtha caused his daughter to be sacrificed; in which, and the like cases, he that so dies, had the liberty to do the action for which he is nevertheless without injury put to death. And the same hold also in a sovereign prince that puts to death an innocent subject. For though the action be against the law of nature as being contrary to equity, as was the killing of Uriah by David, yet it was not an injury to Uriah but to God. [4]

As can be noticed, in this philosophy the responsibility to God is assumed to negate the responsibility toward the people. Acknowledgement of duty to God is considered sufficient in order that the people may have no rights. Justice, here, is what the sovereign does and oppression and injustice have no meaning. In other words, duty to (God is assumed to annul the duty to man, and the right of God to override the rights of men. Indubitably, Hobbes, though apparently a free thinker independent of the ideology of the Church, had ecclesiastical ideas not penetrated into his mind, would not have developed such a theory. Precisely that which is totally absent from such philosophies is the idea that faith and belief in God should be considered conducive to establishment of justice and realization of human rights. The truth is that, firstly, the belief in God is the foundation of the idea of justice and inalienable human rights; it is only through acceptance of the existence of God that it is possible to affirm innate human rights and uphold true justice as two realities independent of any premise and convention; secondly, it is the best guarantee for their execution in practice.

The approach of the Nahj al-balaghah:

The approach of the Nahj al-balaghah to justice and human rights rests on the above-mentioned foundations. In sermon 216, from which we have quoted before, 'Ali ('a) says:

Allah has, by encharging me with your affairs, given me a right over you and awarded you a similar right over me. The issue of rights, as a subject of discourse, is inexhaustible, but is the most restricted of things when it comes to practice. A right does not accrue in favour of any person unless it accrues against him also, and it does not accrue against him unless that it also accrues in his favour.

As can be noticed from the above passage, God is central to 'Ali's statement about justice, rights, and duties. But 'Ali's stand is opposed to the aforementioned view according to which God has bestowed rights on only a handful of individuals solely responsible to Him, and has deprived the rest of people of these rights, making them responsible not only to Him but also to those who have been granted by Him the unlimited privilege to rule others. As a result, the ideas of justice and injustice in regard to the relationship between the ruler and the ruled become meaningless.

In the same sermon 'Ali ('a) says:

No individual, however eminent and high his station in religion, is not above needing cooperation of the people in discharging his obligations and the responsibilities placed upon him by God. Again, no man, however humble and insignificant in the eyes of others, is not too low to be ignored for the purpose of his cooperation and providing assistance.

In the same sermon, 'Ali ('a) asks the people not to address him in the way despots are addressed:

Do not address me in the manner despots are addressed [i.e. Do not address me by titles that are used to flatter despots and tyrants]. In your attitude towards me do not entertain the kind of considerations that are adopted in the presence of unpredictable tyrants. Do not treat me with affected and obsequious manners. Do not imagine that your candour would displease me or that I expect you to treat me with veneration. One who finds it disagreeable to face truth and just criticism, would find it more detestable to act upon them. Therefore, do not deny me a word of truth or a just advice.

The Rulers are the People's Trustees Not Their Lords:

In the last chapter, we said that a dangerous and misleading view became current in the thought of some modern European thinkers interlinking in an unnatural fashion the belief in God on the one hand and negation of peoples rights on the other. This correlation played a significant role in inducing a group to incline towards materialism. Duty and responsibility to God was assumed to necessarily negate the duty and responsibility to the people. Divine obligations completely displaced human obligations. The belief and faith in God (Who, according to the Islamic teachings, created the universe on the principles of truth and justice) was considered to conflict with and contradict the belief in innate and natural human rights, instead of being regarded as their basis. Naturally, belief in the right of people's sovereignty was equated with atheism.

From Islamic point of view the case is actually the reverse. In the Nahj al-balaghah, which is the subject of our discussion, the main topics are tawhid and 'irfan; throughout the talk is about God, whose Name occurs repeatedly everywhere in its pages. Nevertheless, it not only does not neglect to discuss the rights of the people and their privileges vis-a-vis the ruler, in fact regarding the ruler as the trustee and protector of their rights, but also lays great emphasis on this point. According to the logic of this noble book, the imam and the ruler is the protector and trustee of the rights of the people and responsible to them. If one is asked as to which of them exists for the other, it is the ruler' who exists for the people and not vice versa. Sa'di has a similar idea in his mind when he says:

It's not the sheep who are to serve the shepherd, But it is the shepherd who is for their service.

The word ra'iyyah (lit. herd), despite that it gradually acquired an abominable meaning in the Persian language, has an original meaning which is essentially good and humanitarian. The word ra'i for the ruler and ra'iyyah for the masses first appears in the speech of the Prophet ('s) and is literally used thereafter by 'Ali ('a).

This word is derived from the root ra'a, which carries the sense of 'protection' and 'safeguarding'. The word ra'iyyah is applied to the people for the reason that the ruler is responsible for protecting their lives, property, rights, and liberties.

A tradition related from the Holy Prophet ('s) throws full light on the meaning of this word:

Truly, everyone of you is a raii responsible for his rai'yyah. The ruler is the ra'i of his people and responsible for them; the woman is the ra'i of her husband's house and responsible for it; the slave is the ra'i of his master's property and responsible for it; indeed all of you are ra'i and responsible [for those under your charge]. [5]

In the preceding pages we cited some examples from the Nahj al-balaghah which illustrated 'Ali's outlook regarding the rights of the people. Here we shall give sample quotes from other sources, beginning with the following verse of the Holy Quran:

God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners; and that when you judge between the people, judge with justice ... (4:58)

Al-Tabarsi, in his exegesis Majma' al-bayan, commenting upon this verse, remarks:

There are several opinions regarding the meaning of this verse; firstly, that it is about trusts in general, including the Divine and the non Divine, the material and the non-material trusts; secondly, that it is addressed to the rulers, and that God, by making the returning of the trusts an obligation, is commanding them to observe the rights of the people.

Then he further adds:

This is corroborated by the verse immediately following it: O believers, obey God, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you ... (4:59)

According to this verse the people are bound to obey the commands of God, His Messenger and those in authority (wulat al-'amr). While the preceding verse mentions the rights of the people, this one reiterates the complementary rights of those in authority. It has been related from the Imams ('a) that 'one of these two verses is ours (i.e. it establishes our rights in relation to you), and the other is yours (i.e. it outlines your rights in relation to us)' ... Al-Imam al-Baqir ('a) said that the performanee of salat, zakat, sawm, and Hajj are some of the trusts (mentioned in 4:58). One of the trusts (amanat) is that the wulat al-'amr have been

commanded to justly distribute the ghana'im, sadaqat, and whatever is a part of the rights of the people, among them.

In the exegesis al-Mizan, in the part of the commentary upon this verse which deals with tradition, the author relates a tradition from al-Durr al-manthur from 'Ali ('a) that he said:

It is incumbent on the imam to rule according to the decrees revealed by God, and to discharge the trusts that he has been charged with. When he does that, it is incumbent upon the people to pay attention to the Divine command (about obeying the wali al-'amr), to obey him and respond to his call.

As noticed earlier, the Holy Quran considers the ruler and the head of the State as a trustee and a guardian; it regards just government as a fulfillment of a trust entrusted to the ruler. The approach of the Imams('a), in particular that of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a), corresponds with the view which can be inferred from the Holy Quran.

Now that we know the Quran's view of this matter, we may go on to examine the statements of the Nahj al-balaghah on this issue. More than anything else, we must study 'Ali's letters to his governors, especially those which were meant to be official circulars. It is in these letters that we would find glimpses of the teachings of Islam regarding the functions of the ruler and his duties towards the people as well as their rights. Ali ('a), in his letter to the governor of Adharba'ijan, reminds him of his duties towards the people in these words:

Beware lest you consider this assignment as a bait [for acquiring personal gain]; rather, it is a trust lying on your neck. You have been charged with caretaking [of the people] by your superior. It is not for you to betray your duties with respect to the people (ra'iyyah). (Kutub 5)

In another letter written as a circular to tax collectors, after a few words of advice and admonition, 'Ali ('a) says:

Fulfill the demands of justice in your relationship with the people and be patient in matters regarding their needs; because you are treasurers of the people (ra'iyyah), representatives of the community (Ummah), and envoys of your imams. Kutub 51

In the famous epistle to Malik al-'Ashtar, which contains elaborate instructions about various aspects of government, he writes:

Awaken your heart to kindness and mercy for the people (ra'iyyah) and love and tenderness for them. Never, never act with them like a predatory beast which seeks to be satiated by devouring them, for the people fall into two categories: they are either your brethren in faith or your kindred in creation ... Do not ever say, 'I have been given authority' or 'My command

should be obeyed.' Because it corrupts the heart, consumes one's faith, and invites calamities.

In another letter sent as a circular to army commanders, he says:

It is an obligation that an official should not behave differently with the people (ra'iyyah) on account of a distinction he receives or material advantage that he may achieve. Instead these favours from Allah should bring him nearer to God's creatures and increase his compassion towards his brethren. Kutub 50

'Ali ('a) shows an amazing sensitivity to justice and compassion towards the people and a great respect for them and their rights, which, as reflected in his letters, is an exemplary and unique attitude towards this issue.

There is another letter in the Nahj al-balaghah consisting of instructions to the collectors of zakat, and is entitled: 'To the officials assigned to the job of collecting zakat'. The title indicates that it was not addressed to any particular official but sent either as a general instruction in writing or delivered as a routine oral instruction. Al-Sayyid al-Radi has included it in the section of kutub, or letters, with the clarification that he is placing this letter here to show to what extent 'Ali was meticulous in matters pertaining to justice and rights of the people, being attentive not only to main points but also to minute details. Here are 'Ali's instructions:

Set out with the fear of God, Who is One and has no partner. Do not intimidate any Muslim. Do not tresspass upon his land so as to displease him. Do not take from him more than Allah's share in his property. When you approach a tribe, at first come down at their watering place, stay there instead of entering their houses. Approach them with calm dignity and salute them when you stand amongst them, grudge not a proper greeting to them. Then say to them "O servants of God, the Wali and Khalifah of God has sent me to you to collect from you Allah's share in your property. Is there anything of His share in your property? If there is, return it to His Wali. " If someone says 'No', then do not repeat the demand. If someone answers in the affirmative, then go with him without frightening, threatening, or compelling him. Take whatever gold and silver he gives you. If he has cattle or camels, do not approach them save with his permission, because the major part belongs to him. When you arrive (into the cattle enclosure), do not enter upon them in a bossy and rude manner ... Kutub 25, also see 26, 27 and 46

The passages quoted above are sufficient to throw light on 'Ali's attitude as a ruler toward the people under his rule.

Notes:

[1] That is, in the absence of a righteous government, an unjust government, at least preserves law and order in society, which is, of course, better than chaos and rule of jungle.

[2] Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (trns. by Maurice Granston Penguin Books, 1978, p. 51

[3] (Ibid p. 53)

[4] Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, The Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1958, p. 173

[5] Bukhari, Kitab al Nikah, vol. VIII

Al-Tawhid

The Glimpses of Nahj al Balaghah

Murtadha Mutahhari

Transl. from Persian by Ali Quli Qara'i

Inimitable Moral Teaching:

Moral and spiritual teachings constitute the greater part of the Nahj al-balaghah making up almost half of the book. More than anything else the fame of the Nahj al-balaghah is due to the sermons, exhortations, and aphorisms on ethical and moral subjects.

Aside from the moral teachings of the Quran and a number of the sermons and sayings of the Holy Prophet ('s), which are to be considered the source and antecedent of the Nahj al-balaghah, the teachings of the Nahj al-balaghah are without a match in the Arabic and Persian languages. For more than a thousand years these sermons have played an influential role serving as a matchless source of inspiration, and yet retained their original power to quicken the heart, to sublimate emotions, and to bring tears to the eyes. It seems that as long as there remains any trace of humanity in the world, these sermons shall continue to exercise their original power and influence.

A Comparison:

The literature of Arabic and Persian is replete with works containing spiritual and moral teachings of highest sublimity and elegance though mainly in the form of poetry. There is, for example, the famous qasidah by Abu al-Fath al-Busti (360-400/971-1010), which begins with the verse:

Worldly profit and achievement is loss,

And the gain unmarked by the seal of pure goodness.

There is also the elegiacal qasidah of Abu al-Hasan al-Tihami, which he wrote on the early death of his youthful son. It begins with these lines:

The law of fate governs the destiny of creation,

And this world is not a place to settle in.

Every one of these works is an everlasting masterpiece of its kind and shines like a star on the horizons of the Arabic literature of Islamic era, never to lose its freshness and charm.

In Persian, the Gulistan and the Bustan of Sa'di and his qasaid serve as an unusually attractive and effective means of moral advice and are masterpieces of their own kind. To give some examples, there are those famous verses of the Gulistan which start with the verse:

Every breath is a fraction of life gone,

And when I see, not much has remained of it.

Or in his qasa'id where he says:

O people, the world is not a place for leisure and repose;

To the wise man, the world is not worth the effort of acquiring it.

Or at another place where he says:

The world on water and life on wind do rest;

Salutes to the brave who do not tie their hearts to them.

And where he says:

Time and fortune are subject to endless change;

The wise man doesn't attach his heart to the world.

Sa'di's Bustan is full of profound and glowing spiritual advices, and, perhaps, is at its best in the ninth chapter on "Penitence and the Right Way". The same is true of some portions of the Mathnawi of Rumi and works of all other Persian poets, from whom we shall not further quote any examples.

In Islamic literature, including the Arabic and the Persian, there exist excellent examples of spiritual counsels and aphorisms. This Islamic literary genre is not confined to these two languages, but is also found in Turkish, Urdu, and other languages, and a characteristic spirit pervades all of them. Anyone familiar with the Holy Quran, the sayings of the Holy Prophet ('s), Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a), the other Imams ('a), and Muslim saints of the first rank, can observe a characteristic spirit pervading all Persian literature containing spiritual counsel, which represents the spirit of Islam embodied in the Persian language and embellished with its charm and sweetness.

If an expert or a group of experts in Arabic and Persian literature acquainted with the works in all other languages that reflect the spirit of Islam, were to collect the masterpieces in the field of spiritual counsel, the extraordinary richness and maturity of the Islamic culture in lhis field will be revealed.

It is strange that so far as the works on spiritual counsel are concerned the Persian genius has mostly expressed itself in poetry; there is no such work of eminence in prose. All that exists of it in prose is in the form of short sayings, like the prose writings of the Gulistan-a part of which consists of spiritual counsels and is in itself a masterpiece-or the sayings ascribed to Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari.

Of course, my own knowledge is inadequate, but as far as I know there does not exist in Persian prose any remarkable work, except for short sayings-not even a passage which is long enough to be counted as a short discourse, especially a discourse which was originally delivered extempore and later collected and recorded in writing.

There are discourses which have been related from Rumi or Sa'di, meant as oral moral advice to their followers; they also by no means possess the brilliance and charm of the poetic works of those masters, and definitely are not worth considering for a comparison with the discourses of the Nahj al-balaghah.

The same can be said about the writings which have reached us in the form of a treatise or letter, such as the Nasihat al-muluk by Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, the Taziyaneh-ye suluk by Ahmad al-Ghazali, the latter being an elaborate epistle addressed to his follower and pupil 'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadan

Spiritual Counsel and Wisdom:

Moral counsel, according to the Quran, is one of the three ways of invitation towards God (hikmah, maw'izah, al jidal al-hasan, i.e. wisdom, good admonition, and honourable debate, as mentioned in 16: 125).

The difference between hikmah (wisdom, philosophy) and maw'izah (spiritual and moral advice and admonition) lies in this that hikmah is for instruction and imparting knowledge, while maw'izah is meant for reminding. Hikmah is struggle against ignorance and maw'izah is struggle against negligence and indifference. Hikmah deals with the intellect and maw'izah appeals to the heart. Hikmah educates, while maw'izah prepares the intellect for employment of its reserves. Hikmah is a lamp and maw'izah is an eye-opener. Hikmah is for ratiocination, while maw'izah is for self-awakening. Hikmah is the language of the intellect, while maw'izah is the message for the spirit. Accordingly, the personality of the speaker plays an essential role in maw'izah, which is not the case with hikmah. In hikmah, two minds communicate in an impersonal manner But in maw'izah the situation is like the passage of an electric charge that flows from the speaker, who is at a higher potential, to the listener.

For this reason, it has been said of maw'izah that:

If it comes forth from the soul, then it necessarily alights upon the heart.

Otherwise it does not go beyond the listener's ears. It is about the quality of maw'izah that it is said:

The speeeh which originates from the heart enters another heart, and the words which originate from the tongue do not go beyond the ears.

It is true that the words that come from the heart, being the message of the soul, invade other hearts; but if they do not convey the message of the soul, are no more than empty literary devices, which do not go beyond the listener's ear-drum.

Maw'izah and Khitabah (Exhortation and Oratory):

Maw'izah also differs from khitabah (oratory, rhetoric). Although oratory also deals with emotions, but it seeks to stir and agitate them. Maw'izah on the other hand is intended to pacify emotions and it seeks to bring them under control. Oratory is effective when emotions are inert and stagnant; maw'izah is required when lusts and passions become unmanageable. Oratory stirs the passion for power and glory, the feelings of honour, heroism, chivalry, manliness, patriotism, nobility, righteousness, virtue, and service; it is followed by movement and excitement. But maw'izah checks inappropriate passion and excitement. Rhetoric and oratory snatch control from the hands of calculating reason, handing it over to tempestuous passions. But maw'izah appeases the tempests of passions and prepares the ground for calculation and foresight. Oratory draws one to the outside, and maw'izah makes him turn to his inner self.

Rhetoric and counsel are both necessary and essential, and the Nahj al-balaghah makes use of both of them. The main thing is to judge the right time for the use of each of them. The

impassioned speeches of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) were delivered at a time when it was necessary to stir up passions and to build up a tempest to destroy an unjust and oppressive structure, such as at the time of the Battle of Siffin when 'Ali ('a) delivered a fiery speech before the engagement with Mu'awiyah's forces. Mu'awiyah's forces, arriving ahead of 'Ali's army, had taken control of the river bank and stopped the supply of water to 'Ali's camp. At first 'Ali ('a) strived to abstain from resorting to force, desiring the problem to be solved through negotiation. But Mu'awiyah, who had some other designs, considering occupation of the river bank a victory for himself, refused every offer of negotiation. When things became difficult for 'Ali's men, it was time when he should stir the emotions of his soldiers through a fiery speech, creating a tempest that would rout the enemy. This is how 'Ali ('a) addressed his companions:

They are eager that you should make them taste the flavour of battle. So you have two alternatives before you: either submit to disgrace and ignominy, or quench your swords in their blood and appease your thirst with water. It is' death to survive through defeat and true life is to die for the sake of victory. Muawiyah is leading a handful of deluded insurgents and has deceived them by keeping them in the dark about the truth, with the result that their throats are the targets of your deadly arrows. [1]

These words flared their emotions, provoked their sense of honour, and made the blood surge in their veins. It was not yet sunset when 'Ali's companions seized the river bank and threw back Mu'awiyah's forces.

However, 'Ali's mawaiz were delivered in different conditions. During the days of the first three caliphs, and particularly during 'Uthman's rule, immeasurable amounts of wealth and booty won through consecutive victories flowed into Muslim hands. Due to the absence of any careful programmes for correct utilization of that wealth, particularly due to the aristocratic, or rather tribal, rule during the reign of 'Uthman, moral corruption, worldliness, and love of comfort and luxury found their way into the Muslim society. Tribal rivalries were revived, and racial prejudice between Arabs and non-Arabs was added to it. In that clamour for worldliness and mounting prejudices, rivalries, and greed for greater share of the war booty, the only cry of protest charged with spiritual exhortation was that of 'Ali ('a).

God willing, we shall discuss in coming chapters the various themes dealt with in 'Ali's mawa'iz, such as taqwa (God-fearing), worldliness, zuhd (abstinence), desires, the dread of death, the dreads of the Day of Judgement, the need to take lesson from the history of past nations and peoples, etc.

The Nahj al-balaghah's Recurring Themes:

Out of the 241 fragments collected under the title 'Khutab' by al-Sayyid al-Radi (though not all of them are Khutab or sermons) about 86 can be classed as mawa'iz or at least contain a

series of spiritual advices. Some of them, however, are elaborate and lengthy, like the khutbah 176, which opens with the sentence (Avail of the Divine expositions), the khutbah named 'al-Qasi'ah; (which is the longest of the sermons of the Nahj al-balaghah), and the khutbah 93 (called khutbat al-muttaqin, the 'Sermon of the Pious').

Out of some seventy-nine passages that are classed as 'kutub' letters, (which not all of them are) about twenty-five, either completely or partially, consist of spiritual and moral teachings. Some of them are quite lengthy and elaborate-like letter 31, which constitutes 'Ali's advice to his son al-Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba ('a), and the lengthiest of all, except the famous directive sent to Malik al-'Ashtar. Another one is letter 45, the well-known epistle of 'Ali ('a) to Uthman ibn Hunayf, his governor in Basrah.

The Themes in Spiritual Advices:

Various themes are found in the spiritual advices of the Nahj al-balaghah: taqwa (God-fearing); tawakkul (trust in God); sabr (patience, Fortitude); zuhd (abstinence); the renunciation of worldly pleasures and luxuries, the renunciation of inordinate desires and far-fetched hopes; the condemnation of injustice and prejudice, emphasis on mercy, love, helping of the oppressed and sympathy toward the weak; emphasis on the qualities of fortitude, courage, and strength; emphasis on unity and solidarity and condemnation of disunity; the invitation to take lesson from history; the invitation to thought, meditation, remembrance, and self-criticism; the reminders about the brevity of life and the swiftness of its pace; the remembrance of death; the hardships of death-throes; experiences of the life after death; the reminders of the dreadful events of the Day of Judgement, and so on. These are some of the frequent themes of the spiritual advices of the Nahj al-balaghah.

Ali's Logic:

In order to understand this aspect of the Nahj al-balaghah, or, in other words, to understand 'Ali ('a) when he speaks as a moral and spiritual counsellor and to understand his didactic outlook, so as to draw benefit from that everflowing source, it is not enough to enumerate the various themes and topics dealt with by 'Ali ('a) in his discourses. It is not sufficient merely to remark that 'Ali ('a) has spoken about taqwa, tawakkul or zuhd; rather, we must see what significance did he attribute to these words. We must uncover his didactic philosophy regarding the development of the human character and his perception of the human aspiration for piety, purity, freedom, and deliverance from spiritual servitude and thraldom. As we know, these are words employed by all-in particular those who are wont to play the role of a moralist; but all individuals do not mean the same kind of things by these terms. Sometimes, the meanings one person attributes to these words are quite contrary to those meant by another, and naturally lead to conclusions which are quite opposite.

Consequently, it is essential to elaborate somewhat the specific meanings of these terms in

'Ali's vocabulary, starting with taqwa.

Taqwa:

Taqwa is one of the most frequent motifs of the Nahj al-balaghah. In fact it would be hard to find another book which emphasizes this spiritual term to the extent of this book. Even in the Nahj al-balaghah, no other term or concept receives so much attention and stress as taqwa. What is taqwa?

Often it is thought that taqwa means piety and abstinence and so implies a negative attitude. In other words, it is maintained that the greater the amount of abstinence, withdrawal, and self-denial, the more perfect is one's taqwa. According to this interpretation, taqwa is a concept divorced from active life; secondly it is a negative attitude; thirdly, it means that the more severely this negative attitude is exercised, the greater one's taqwa would be. Accordingly, the sanctimonious professors of taqwa, in order to avoid its being tainted and to protect it from any blemish, withdraw from the bustle of life, keeping themselves away from involvement in any matter or affair of the world.

Undeniably, abstinence and caution exercised with discretion is an essential principle of wholesome living. For, in order to lead a healthy life, man is forced to negate and affirm, deny and posit, renounce and accept, avoid and welcome different things. It is through denial and negation that the positive in life can be realized. It is through renunciation and avoidance that concentration is given to action.

The principle of tawhid contained in the dictum la ilaha illa Allah is at the same time a negation as well as an affirmation. Without negation of everything other than God it is not possible to arrive at tawhid. That is why rebellion and surrender, kufr (unbelief) and iman (belief), go together; that is, every surrender requires a rebellion and every faith (iman) calls for a denial and rejection (kufr), and every affirmation implies a negation. The Quran says:

So whoever disbelieves in taghut and believes in God, has laid hold of the most firm bond .... (2:256)

However, firstly, every denial, negation, rejection, and rebellion operates between the limits of two opposites; the negation of one thing implies movement towards its opposite; the rejection of the one marks the beginning of the acceptance of the other. Accordingly, every healthy denial and rejection has both a direction and a goal, and is confined within certain definite limits. Therefore, a blind practice and purposeless attitude, which has neither direction nor a goal, nor is confined within any limits, is neither defensible nor of any spiritual worth.

Secondly, the meaning of taqwa in the Nahj al-balaghah is not synonymous with that of

'abstinence', even in its logically accepted sense discussed above. Taqwa, on the other hand, according to the Nahj al-balaghah, is a spiritual faculty which appears as a result of continued exercise and practice. The healthy and rational forms of abstinence are, firstly, the preparatory causes for the emergence of that spiritual faculty; secondly, they are also its effects and outcome.

This faculty strengthens and vitalizes the soul, giving it a kind of immunity. A person who is devoid of this faculty, if he wants to keep himself free from sins, it is unavoidable for him to keep away from the causes of sin. Since society is never without these causes, inevitably he has to go into seclusion and isolate himself. It follows from this argument that one should either remain pious by isolating himself from one's environment, or he should enter society and bid farewell to taqwa. Moreover, according to this logic, the more isolated and secluded a person's life is and the more he abstains from mixing with other people, the greater is his piety and taqwa in the eyes of the common people.

However, if the faculty of taqwa is cultivated inside a person's soul, it is no longer necessary for him to seclude himself from his environment. He can keep himself clean and uncorrupted without severing his relations with society.

The former kind of persons are like those who take refuge in mountains for fear of some plague or epidemic. The second kind resemble those who acquire immunity and resistance through vaccination and so do not deem it necessary to leave the city and avoid contact with their townsfolk. On the other hand, they hasten to the aid of the suffering sick in order to save them. Sa'di is alluding to the first kind of pious in his Gulistan, when he says:

Saw I a sage in the mountains,

Happy in a cave, far from the world's tide.

Said I, "Why not to the city return,

And lighten your heart of this burden?"

He said, "The city abounds in tempting beauties,

And even elephants slip where mud is thick."

The Nahj al-balaghah speaks of taqwa as a spiritual faculty acquired through exercise and assiduity, which on its emergence produces certain characteristic effects, one of which is the ability to abstain from sins with ease.

I guarantee the truth of my words and I am responsible for what I say. If similar events and

experiences of the past serve as a lesson for a person, then taqwa prevents him from plunging recklessly into doubts ... [2]

Beware that sins are like unruly horses whose reins have been taken way and which plunge with their riders into hell-fire. But taqwa is like a trained steed whose reins are in the hands of its rider and enters with its rider into Paradise. [3]

In this sermon taqwa is described as a spiritual condition which results in control and command over one's self. It explains that the result of subjugation to desires and lusts and being devoid of taqwa degrades one's personality making it vulnerable to the cravings of the carnal self. In such a state, man is like a helpless rider without any power and control, whom his mount takes wherever it desires. The essence of taqwa lies in possessing a spiritual personality endowed with will-power, and possessing mastery over the domain of one's self. A man with taqwa is like an expert horseman riding a well-trained horse and who with complete mastery and control drives his tractable steed in the direction of his choice.

Certainly the taqwa of God assists His awliya (friends) in abstaining from unlawful deeds and instils His fear into their hearts. As a result, their nights are passed in wakefulness and their days in thirst [on account of fasting].[4]

Here 'Ali ('a) makes it clear that taqwa is something which automatically leads to abstention from unlawful actions and to the fear of God, which are its necessary effects. Therefore, according to this view, taqwa is neither itself abstinence nor fear of God; rather, it is a sacred spiritual faculty of which these two are only consequences:

For indeed, today taqwa is a shield and a safeguard, and tomorrow (i.e. in the Hereafter) it shall be the path to Paradise. [5]

In khutbah 157, taqwa is compared to an invincible fortress built on heights which the enemy has no power to infiltrate. Throughout, the emphasis of the Imam ('a) lies on the spiritual and psychological aspect of taqwa and its effects upon human spirit involving the emergence of a dislike for sin and corruption and an inclination towards piety, purity, and virtue.

Further illustrations of this view can be cited from the Nahj al-balaghah, but it seems that the above quotations are sufficient.

Taqwa is Immunity not Restraint:

We have already mentioned some of the various elements found in the spiritual advices (mawa'iz) of the Nahj al-balaghah. We began with taqwa and saw that taqwa, from the viewpoint of the Nahj al-balaghah, is a sublime spiritual faculty which is the cause of certain

attractions and repulsions; i.e. attraction towards edifying spiritual values and repulsion towards degrading materialistic vices. The Nahj al-balaghah considers taqwa as a spiritual state that gives strength to human personality and makes man the master of his own self.

Taqwa as Immunity:

The Nahj al-balaghah stresses that taqwa is for man a shield and a shelter, not a chain or a prison. There are many who do not distinguish between immunity and restraint, between security and confinement, and promptly advocate the destruction of the sanctuary of taqwa in the name of freedom and liberation from bonds and restraint.

That which is common between a sanctuary and a prison is the existence of a barrier. Whereas the walls of a sanctuary avert dangers, the walls of a prison hinder the inmates from realizing their inner capacities and from benefiting from the bounties of life. 'Ali ('a) clarifies the difference between the two, where he says:

Let it be known to you, O servants of God, that taqwa is a formidable fortress, whereas impiety and corruption is a weak and indefensible enclosure that does not safeguard its people, and does not offer any protection to those who take refuge in it. Indeed, it is only with taqwa that the tentacles of sins and misdeeds can be severed. [6]

'Ali ('a), in this sublime advice, compares sins and evil deeds which are afflictions of the human soul to poisonous insects and reptiles, and suggests that the faculty of taqwa is an effective defence against them. In some of his discourses, he makes it clear that taqwa not only does not entail restraint and restriction or is an impediment to freedom, but on the other hand it is the source and fountainhead of all true freedoms. In khutbah 230, he says:

Taqwa is the key to guidance, the provision for the next world, the freedom from every kind of slavery, and the deliverance from every form of destruction.

The message is clear. Taqwa gives man spiritual freedom and liberates him from the chains of slavery and servitude to lusts and passions. It releases him from the bonds of envy, lust, and anger, and this expurgates society from all kinds of social bondages and servitudes. Men who are not slaves of comfort, money, power, and glory, never surrender to the various forms of bondage which plague the human society.

The Nahj al-balaghah deals with the theme of taqwa and its various effects in many of its passages; but we don't consider it necessary to discuss all of them here. Our main objective here is to discover the meaning of taqwa from the point of view of the Nahj al-balaghah, so as to unearth the reason for so much emphasis that this book places on this concept.

Of the many effects of taqwa that have been pointed out, two are more important than the

rest: firstly, the development of insight and clarity of vision; secondly, the capacity to solve problems and to weather difficulties and crises. We have discussed this in detail elsewhere. [7] Moreover, a discussion of these effects of taqwa here will take us beyond our present aim which is to clarify the true meaning of taqwa. It will not be out of place to call attention to certain profound remarks of the Nahj al-balaghah about the reciprocal relationship between the human being and taqwa.

A Reciprocal Commitment:

In spite of the great emphasis laid by the Nahj al-balaghah on taqwa as a kind of guarantee and immunity against sin and temptation, it should be noticed that one must never neglect to safeguard and protect taqwa itself. Taqwa guards man, and man must safeguard his taqwa. This, as we shall presently explain, is not a vicious circle.

This reciprocal guarding of the one by the other is comparable to the one between a person and his clothes. A man takes care of his clothes and protects them from being spoiled or stolen, while the clothes in turn guard him against heat or cold. In fact the Holy Quran speaks of taqwa as a garment:

And the garment of taqwa -that is better. (7:26)

'Ali ('a), speaking about this relationship of mutual protection between a person and his tawqa', says:

Turn your sleep into wakefulness by the means of taqwa and spend your days in its company. Keep its consciousness alive in your hearts. With it wash away your sins and cure your ailments... Beware, guard your taqwa and place your self under its guard. [8]

At another place in the same sermon, 'Ali ('a) says:

O God's servants, I advise you to cultivate the taqwa of God. Indeed it is a right that God has over you and it is through it that you can have any right over God. You should beseech God's help for guarding it and seek its aid for [fulfilling your duty to] God. [9]

Zuhd and Piety:

Another spiritual motif conspicuous in the teachings of the Nahj al-balaghah is zuhd, which after taqwa is the most recurring theme of the book. 'Zuhd' means renunciation of the 'world', and very often we encounter denunciation of the 'world', and invitation and exhortation to renounce it. It appears to me that it forms one of the important themes of the Nahj al-balaghah, which needs to be elucidated and explained in the light of various aspects of 'Ali's

approach.

We shall begin our discussion with the word 'zuhd' The words 'zuhd' and 'raghbah' (attraction, desire), if mentioned without reference to their objects, are opposite to each other. 'Zuhd' means indifference and avoidance, and 'raghbah ' means attraction, inclination, and desire.

Indifference can be of two kinds: involuntary and cultivated. A person is involuntarily indifferent towards a certain thing when by nature he does not have any desire for it, as in the case of a sick person who shows no desire either for food, or fruits, or anything else. Obviously, this kind of indifference and abstinence has nothing to do with the particular sense implied in 'zuhd '.

Another kind of indifference or abstinence is spiritual or intellectual; that is, things which are natural objects of desire are not considered the goal and objective by a human being in the course of his struggle for perfection and felicity. The ultimate objective and goal may be something above mundane aims and sensual pleasures; either it may be to attain the sensuous pleasures of the Hereafter, or it may not belong to this kind of things. It may be some high ethical and moral ideal, like honour, dignity, nobility, liberty, or it may belong to the spiritual sphere, like the remembrance of God, the love of God, and the desire to acquire nearness to Him.

Accordingly the zahid (i.e. one who practises zuhd) is someone whose interest transcends the sphere of material existence, and whose object of aspiration lies beyond the kind of things we have mentioned above. The indifference of a zahid originates in the sphere of his ideas, ideals, and hopes, not in his physiological makeup.

There are two places where we come across the definition of 'zuhd' in the Nahj al-balaghah. Both of them confirm the above interpretation of zuhd. 'Ali ('a), in khutba 81, says:

O people! zuhd means curtailing of hopes, thanking God for His blessings and bounties, and abstaining from that which He has forbidden.

In hikmah 439, he says:

All zuhd is summarized in two sentences of the Quran: God, the Most Exalted, says, ... So that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor rejoice in what has come to you. [57:23] Whoever does not grieve over what he has lost and does not rejoice over what comes to him has acquired zuhd in both of its aspects.

Obviously when something does not occupy a significant position amongst one's objectives and ideals, or rather is not at all significant in the scheme of things which matter to him, its gain and loss do not make the slightest difference to him.

However, there are some points that need clarification. Is zuhd, or detachment from the world, on which the Nahj al-balaghah, following the Quranic teachings, puts so much emphasis, to be taken solely in an ethical and spiritual sense? In other words, is zuhd purely a spiritual state, or does it possess practical implications also? That is, is zuhd spiritual abstinence only or is it accompanied by an abstinence in practical life also? Assuming that zuhd is to be applied in practice, is it limited to abstinence from unlawful things (muharramat), as pointed out in khutba 81, or does it include something more, as exemplified by the life of 'Ali ('a) and before him bythe life of the Holy Prophet ('s)?

Proceeding on the assumption that zuhd is not limited to-muharramat only and that it covers permissible things (mubahat) as well, one may ask: what is its underlying rationale and philosophy? What is the use of an ascetic life that limits and confines life, rejecting its blessings and bounties? Is zuhd to be practised at all times or only under certain particular conditions? Is zuhd-in the sense of abstinence from even permissible things-basically in agreement with other Islamic teachings?

Apart from this, the basis of zuhd and renunciation of the world is the pursuit of supra-material objectives and ideals. What are they from the point of view of Islam? In particular, how does the Nahj al-balaghah describe them?

All these questions regarding zuhd, renunciation, and curtailing of hopes-themes which have so often been discussed in the Nahj al-balaghah-need to be clarified. We shall discuss these questions in the following pages and try to answer them.

Islamic Zuhd and Christian Asceticism:

In the last section we said that zuhd, as defined by the Nahj al-balaghah, is a spiritual state that makes the zahid, on account of his spiritual and other worldly aspirations, indifferent towards the manifestations of material existence. This indifference is not confined to his heart, intellect, and feelings and is not limited to his conscience. It also manifests itself on the practical level of life in the form of simplicity, contentment, and obstention from hedonistic urges and love of luxuries. A life of zuhd not only implies that a man should be free from attachment to the material aspects of life, but he should also practically abstain from indulgence in pleasures. The zuhhad are those who in life are satisfied with the barest material necessities. 'Ali ('a) was a zahid, who was not only emotionally detached from the world but also indifferent to its pleasures and enjoyments. In other words, he had 'renounced' the 'world'.

Two Questions:

Here, inevitably, two questions shall arise in the reader's mind. Firstly, as we know, Islam has

opposed monasticism considering it to be an innovation of Christian priests and monks.[10] The Prophet ('s) has stated in unequivocal terms that:

There is no monasticism (rahbaniyyah) in Islam.

Once when the Prophet ('s) was informed that some of his Companions had retired into seclusion renouncing everything and devoting all their time to worship and prayer in seclusion, he became very indignant. He told them: "I, who am your prophet, am not such". In this way, the Prophet ('s) made them to understand that Islam is a religion of life and society, not a monastic faith. Moreover, the comprehensive and multifaceted teachings of Islam in social, economic, political and moral spheres are based on reverence for life, not on its renunciation.

Apart from this, monasticism and renunciation of life are incompatible with the world-view of Islam and its optimistic outlook about the universe and creation. Unlike some other philosophies and creeds, Islam does not view the world and life in society with pessimism. It does not divide all creation into ugly and beautiful, black and white, good and evil, proper and improper, right and wrong. Now the second question may be stated in these words: "Aside from the fact that asceticism is the same as monasticism-which are both incompatible with the Islamic spirit-what is the philosophy underlying zuhd ?

Moreover, why should men be urged to practise zuhd? Why should man, seeing the limitless bounties of God and good things of life around him, be called upon to pass by the side of this delightful stream indifferently and without so much as wetting his feet? Are the ascetic teachings found in Islam, on this basis, later innovations (bid'ah) introduced into Islam from other creeds like Christianity and Buddhism? And if this is correct, how are we to explain and interpret the teachings of the Nahj al-balaghah? How can we explain the indubitable details known about the Prophet's life and that of 'Ali ('a)?

The answer is that Islamic zuhd is different from Christian asceticism or monasticism. Asceticism is retreat from people and society and seclusion for the purpose of worship. According to it, the life and works of the world are separate from the works of the Here-after and the one is alien to the other. One should, of necessity, choose either one of the two. One should either devote oneself to worship of God which shall bear fruits in the Hereafter, or take up the life of the world and benefit from its immediate pleasures. Accordingly, monasticism is opposed to life and social relationships. It requires with-drawal from people and negation of responsibility and commitment towards them.

On the other hand, zuhd in Islam, though it requires a simple and unaffected life-style and is based on abstention from luxuries and love of comforts and pleasures, operates in the very midst of life and social relations and is sociable. It draws inspiration, and proceeds, from the goal of better fulfilment of social responsibilities and duties.

The conception of zuhd in Islam is not something that would lead to asceticism, because a sharp distinction between this world and the next is nowhere drawn. From the viewpoint of Islam, this world and the next are not separable, not alien to each other. The relation of this world to the other is similar to that between the inward and outward sides of a single reality. They are like the warp and woof of a single fabric. They are to each other as the soul to the body. Their relation-ship can be assumed to be something midway between unity and duality. The works of this world and those of the next are interrelated similarly. Their difference is that of quality, without being essential. Accordingly, that which is harmful for the other world is also to one's detriment in the present world, and everything which is beneficial for the summum bonum of life in this world is also beneficial for life in the next world. Therefore, if a certain work which is in accordance with the higher interests of life in this world is performed with motives that are devoid of the higher, supra-material, and transcendental elements, that work would be considered totally this-worldly and would not, as the Quran tells us, elevate man in his ascent towards God. However, if a work or action is motivated by sublime aims and intentions and is executed with a higher vision that transcends the narrow limits of worldly life, the same work and action is considered 'other-worldly.'

The Islamic zuhd, as we said, is grounded in the very context and stream of life and gives a peculiar quality to living by emphasizing certain values in life. As affirmed by the Islamic texts, zuhd in Islam is based on three essential principles of the Islamic world-outlook.

The Three Essential Principles:

1. Enjoyments derived from the physical, material, and natural means of life are not sufficient for man's happiness and felicity. A series of spiritual needs are inbuilt in the human nature, without whose satisfaction the enjoyment provided by material means of life is not enough to make man truly happy.

2. The individual's felicity and happiness is not separable from that of society. Since man is emotionally bound to his society, and carries within him a sense of responsibility towards it, his individual happiness cannot be independent of the prosperity and peace of his fellow men.

3. The soul, despite its fusion and a kind of unity with the body, has a reality of its own. It is a principle in addition to the body which constitutes another principle in itself. The soul is an independent source of pleasure and pain. Like the body, or rather even more than it, it stands in need of nourishment, training, growth, and development. The soul, however, cannot dispense with the health and vigour of the body. At the same time, it is undeniable that total indulgence in physical pleasures and complete immersion into the delights of sensual experiences does not leave any opportunity for realizing the soul's unlimited possibilities. Therefore, there exists a kind of incompatibility between physical enjoyment and spiritual satisfaction. This is

especially true if the attention and attachment to physical needs were carried to the very extreme of total immersion and absorption.

It is not true that all sorrow and grief are related to the soul and that all pleasures are derived from the body. In fact, the spiritual pleasures are much profounder, purer, and lasting than bodily pleasures. To sum up, one-sided attention to physical pleasures and material enjoyments finally results in compromising the total human happiness. Therefore, if we want to make our lives happy, rich, pure, majestic, attractive, and beautiful, we cannot afford to ignore the spiritual aspects of our being.

With due attention to these principles, the meaning of zuhd in Islam becomes clear. The knowledge of these principles allows us to understand why Islam rejects monasticism but welcomes a form of asceticism which is rooted in the very heart of life and in the context of social existence. We shall explain the meaning of zuhd in Islamic texts on the basis of these three principles.

The Zahid and the Monk:

We said that Islam encourages zuhd but condemns monasticism. Both the zahid and the ascetic monk seek abstinence from pleasures and enjoyments. But the monk evades life in society and the respon-sibilities and the duties it entails, regarding them as the low and mean facets of worldly existence, and takes refuge in mountains or monasteries. On the other hand, the zahid accepts society with its norms, ideals, duties, and commitments. Both the zahid and the monk are otherworldly, but the zahid is a social otherworldly. Also their attitudes to abstinence from pleasures are not identical; the monk disdains hygiene and cleanliness and derides married life and procreation. The zahid, on the contrary, considers hygiene and cleanliness, matrimony and parenthood to be a part of his duties. Both the zahid and the monk are ascetics, but whereas the 'world' renounced by the zahid is indulgence and immersion in pleasures, luxuries, and comforts (he rejects the attitude which considers them to be life's ultimate goal and objective), the 'world' renounced by the monk includes life's work and activity, and the duty and responsibility which go with social life. That is why the zahid's zuhd operates in the midst of social life, and is, therefore, not only compatible with social responsibility and commitment but is moreover a very effective means of discharging them.

The difference between the zahid and the monk arises from two different world-outlooks. From the viewpoint of the monk, this world and the next are two different spheres, separate from and unrelated to each other. To him, happiness in this world is not only independent of happiness in the next but is incompatible with it. He considers the two forms of happiness as irreconcilable contradictories. Naturally, that which leads to felicity and happiness in this world is considered different from the works and deeds which lead to success in the Hereafter. In other words, the means of acquiring happiness in this world and the next are regarded as being incompatible and contradictory. It is imagined that a single work and action

cannot simultaneously be a means for acquiring happiness in both the worlds.

But in the world-view of the zahid, the world and the Hereafter are interconnected. The world is a preamble to the Hereafter. It is a farm of which the Hereafter is the harvest. From the zahid's viewpoint, that which gives order, security, uprightness, prosperity, and flourish to life is application of other-worldly criteria to the life of this world.

The essence of felicity and happiness in the other world lies in successful accomplishment of commitments and responsibilities of this world, performed with faith, piety, purity, and taqwa.

In truth, the zahid's concept of zuhd and the monk's rationale for his asceticism are incompatible and contradictory to each other. Basically, monasticism is a deviation introduced by men into the teachings of prophets, due to ignorance or vested interests. Now we shall explain the philosophy of zuhd in the light of the teachings of the Islamic texts.

Zuhd and Altruism:

One of the ingredients of zuhd is altruism. Ithar (altruism) and atharah (egoism) are derived from the same root. Atharah means giving precedence to one's interests over those of others. In other words it implies monopolizing everything for oneself and depriving others. But Ithar means preferring others over oneself and bearing hardship for the comfort and good of others.

The zahid, by virtue of his simple, humble, and content living, is hard upon himself so that others may live in ease. He sacrifices for the sake of the needy because with his sensitive heart which feels the pains of others he can relish the world's bounties only when there does not exist a single man oppressed by need. He derives greater satisfaction by feeding and clothing others and working for their ease than if he did those things for himself. He endures deprivation, hunger, and pain, so that others may be well fed and live without hardships.

Ithar represents the most magestic and sublime manifestation of human greatness, and only very great human beings climb to its noble heights.

The Holy Quran refers to the episode of the self-sacrifice of 'Ali ('a) and his honoured family in the glorious verses of the Surat Hal ata. 'Ali, Fatimah, and their sons once gave away whatever they had-which was no more than a few loaves of bread-to the poor for the sake of God, and despite their own distress. That is why this story circulated among the angels and a verse of the Quran was revealed in the praise of their act.

Once when the Holy Prophet ('s) came to visit Hadrat al-Zahra' ('s), observing that his daughter had put on a silver bracelet and hung a new curtain on the door, signs of unease

appeared upon his face. Al-Zahra' ('a) was quick to discern the cause of her father's reaction. When the Prophet ('s) left, without losing time, she took out her bracelet and removing the curtain from the door, sent them to be carried to the Prophet ('s) so that he might give them to the needy. When al-Zahra's messenger brought them to the Prophet ('s) he looked at them with amazement. He was glad that his daughter had taken the hint and foregone her simplest luxuries for the benefit of others.

'The neighbours first', was the maxim in the household of 'Ali ('a) and Fatimah ('a). In khutbah 193, which describes the qualities of the pious, 'Ali ('a) says:

The man of [taqwa] subjects his own self to hardships so that the people may live in comfort.

The Holy Quran describes the Ansar (the Helpers), who in spite of their poverty welcomed the Muhajirun (the Emigrants) as their own brethren, giving them preference over their own selves, in these words:

They love whosoever has migrated to them, not finiding in their breasts any need for what they have been given, and prefer others above themselves, even though poverty be their lot ... (59:9)

Obviously, the altruistic ingredient of zuhd comes into play only under certain conditions. In an affluent society, altruism is less frequently required. But in conditions where poverty and deprivation are prevalent-as in the society of al-Madinah during the Prophet's time-its need is greater. This is one of the secrets of the apparent difference of the life-styles of 'Ali ('a) and the Holy Prophet ('s) with the rest of the Imams ('a).

In any case, zuhd with its underlying altruistic motives has nothing in common with monasticism and escape from society; instead it is a product of man's gregarious instincts and a manifestation of his noblest feelings, which reinforce the social bonds between fellow human beings.

Sympathy and Kindness:

The sympathy and the willingness to share the suffering of the needy and the deprived is another ingredient of zuhd. When the destitute witness the luxuries and comforts of the richer classes, their anguish is multiplied. To the hardships of poverty and destitution is added the stinging feeling of deprivation and backwardness in relation to others.

Man, by nature, cannot tolerate to remain a silent spectator while others who have no merit over him eat, drink, enjoy and relish freely at the cost of his deprivation. When society is divided into haves and have-nots, the man of God considers himself responsible. In the first place, as Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) says, he should strive to change the situation which permits

the gluttony of the rich oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, in accordance with the covenant of God with the learned men of the Ummah.[11] In the second place, he strives to ameliorate the state of affairs through altruism and self-sacrifice, by sharing whatever he possesses with the needy and the deprived. But when he sees that the situation has deteriorated beyond reparation and it is practically impossible to alleviate the misery of the poor through sympathy, he practically shares their deprivation and tries to soothe their wounded hearts by adopting a life-style similar to that of the poor.

Sympathy with others and sharing their suffering is of essential importance especially in the case of the leaders of the Ummah on whom all eyes are fixed. 'Ali ('a), more than at any other time, lived a severely ascetic life during the days of his caliphate. He used to say:

Indeed God has made it obligatory for just leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of the poor class so that they do not despair of their distress.[12]

Should I be content with being called 'Amir al-Mu'minin' while refusing to share the adversities of the times with the people? Or should I be an example to them in the distress of life?[13]

In the same letter (to 'Uthman ibn Hunayf) he says:

It is absolutely out of question that my desires should overpower me and my greed should lead me to relish choicest foods while in the Hijaz and Yamamah there may be some people who despair of even a single loaf of bread and who do not get a full meal. Shall I lie with a satiated belly while around me are those whose stomachs are hungry and whose livers are burning? [14]

At the same time, 'Ali ('a) would reproach anyone else for practising the same kind of asceticism in life. When faced with their objection as to why he himself practised it, he would reply, "I am not like you. The leaders have a different duty." This approach of 'Ali ('a) can be observed in the conversation with 'Asim ibn Ziyad al-Harith. [15]

In volume IX of the Bihar al-'anwar, it has been related from al-Kafi that Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) said:

God has appointed me the leader of the people and made it my duty to adopt a way of living, in food and clothing, on a par with the poorest classes of society, so that, on the one hand, it may soothe the distress of the poor and, on the other, restrain the rich from revolting. [16]

An incident is related from the life of the great faqih Wahid Behbahani, may God be pleased with him. One day he observed one of his daughters-in-law wearing a garment made of a

fabric usually worn by women of rich families of those days. He reproached his son (the late Aqa Muhammad Isma'il, the lady's husband) in that regard. The son recited this verse of the Quran in reply to his father's remarks:

Say: 'Who has forbidden the ornament of God which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of His providing? (7:32)

The father said: "I don't say that putting on good dress, eating good food, and making use of God's bounties is forbidden. Not at all. Such restrictions do not exist in Islam. However, there is one thing to be remembered. We are a family charged with the duty of the religious leadership of Muslims and have special responsibilities. When the people of poor families see the rich live luxuriously, their frustration is aggravated. Their only consolation is that at least the 'Aqa's family' lives like they do. Now if we too adopt the life-styles of the rich, that will deprive them of their only consolation. However, we cannot practically change the present social condition, but let us not grudge at least this much of sympathy."

As can be clearly seen, zuhd, which derives motivation from sympathy and readiness to share the sufferings of others, has nothing common with monastic asceticism. It is not based on escapism from society. The Islamic conception of zuhd is a means of alleviating the sufferings of society.

Zuhd and Freedom:

Another ingredient of zuhd is love of freedom and independence. The union between zuhd and freedom is as primordial as it is indissoluble.

The dictates of need and exigency are the criteria of opportunists, whereas independence from want is characteristic of free men. The deepest aspiration of the free men unattached to the world is unencumbrance, buoyancy, absence of hindrance, and freedom of movement.

As a result they adopt zuhd and contentment so as to reduce their wants to a minimum, liberating their selves from the bondage of need, of things and persons.

The life of a human being, like that of any other animal, requires a series of natural and indispensable necessities, like air, shelter, bread, water, and clothing. Man cannot free himself entirely from attachment to such needs and other things such as light and heat so as to make himself, in philosophical terminology, "self-sustaining" (muktafi bidhatih).

However, there are a series of other wants which are not necessary and natural, but are imposed upon one in the course of one's life either by oneself, or by social and historical factors beyond his control, which nevertheless set limits upon his freedom. Such constraints are not very dangerous as long as they are not transformed into inner needs, such as certain

political constraints and compulsions. The most dangerous of compulsions are those which emerge as inner needs from within one's own self and shackle him.

The mechanism of these needs, which lead to inner weakness, impotence, and defeat, operates in such a way that when one turns to luxuries and comforts in order to add charm, delight, and glamour to one's life so as to feel more secure and strong in order to derive greater gratification from life, one is impelled to possess more and more things. In the course of time one gets gradually accustomed to and engrossed in the means of one's comfort, luxury, and power. These habits gradually result in deeper attachment to and love for those things, and he is bound to them with invisible bonds, thus becoming helpless and impotent in front of them. That is, the same thing which had once added charm and delight to his life later deprives his personality of its vigour, and the same thing which once made him feel powerful against nature now turns him into a helpless slave without a will of his own.

Man's inclination towards zuhd is rooted in his love of freedom. By nature he is disposed toward possession of things and their exploitation; but when he realizes that the things, to the very extent they make him outwardly powerful and successful, inwardly transform him into a weakling without will-power and a slave, he rebels against this slavery. This rebellion of man is what we call zuhd.

Our poets and sages have spoken a lot about freedom and liberation. Hafiz calls himself 'the slave of the magnanimity of him who is free of everything under the blue sky that carries any taint of attachment.' Among the trees, he admires the cypress which to him seems 'free of all woes.' What those great men meant by 'freedom' is freedom from attachment, freedom from being possessed, bewitched, and captivated by anything.

But freedom implies something greater than being devoid of attachments. The ties which make a man weak, helpless, dependent, and impotent are not only those which originate in the heart or emotional attachments; to these must be added the various bodily, physical and psychological conditionings and artificial appendages that are first acquired for adding charm and glory to life and for satisfaction of the lust for power and strength, later growing into a form of addiction or rather becoming a second nature. These, while they may not involve one's emotional attachments, or may even be regarded by one as reprehensible, should be counted as even stronger means of human servitude and which may bring greater even degradation than emotional attachments.

Take the example of an enlightened 'arif with a heart free of worldly attachments, for whom, nevertheless, addiction to tea, tobacco or opium has become a second nature, or for whom abstention from foods to which he is accustomed may endanger his life. Can such a man lead a free existence?

Liberty from attachments is a necessary condition of freedom, but it is not sufficient in itself.

Accustoming oneself to a minimum of the niceties of life and abstention from affluent living is another condition of freedom.

The first thing to strike Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, one of the honoured Companions, when describing the station of the Holy Prophet ('s), is:

The Prophet of God, may peace be upon him and his Household, could manage with the minimum necessities of life.

Is it a merit to be able to do with a minimum of means? If we take only the economic aspect into view, we should say that the Prophet's level of consumption was quite low. In this respect, therefore, the answer would be: "No, not at all; it is not a significant merit." But if viewed from a spiritual viewpoint, that is when examined by the criterion of freedom from worldly bondages, we have to admit that it is a great merit indeed. Because it is only by acquisition of this merit that a human being can live with any measure of unfettered freedom and unimpeded mobility, and participate in the incessant struggle of life with agility and vigour.

This matter is not restricted to habits involving the individual; binding oneself to social habits and customs, to modes and manners of dealing with people, the mesh of social connections and gatherings, adherence to styles and fashions in dress and demeanour-these and the like of these encumber life and deprive it of dynamism

Freedom of movement in the arena of life is like swimming; lesser the interference and incumbrance for the swimmer, the greater is his ability to move around in water. Too many attachments will not only deprive him of his mobility but bring the danger of drowning.

Athir al-Din Akhsikati (d. 577 or 579/1181 or 1183) says:

To cross the river of life, shed your robes;

Nakedness is a condition of keeping afloat.

Farrukhi Yazdi says:

Of nakedness the sage does not complain,

A sword of good steel would not rust without a sheath.

Baba Tahir has a ruba'i which though intended for some other purpose is nevertheless relevant here:

O heart, thy path is better when covered with thorns;

Thy track is better when stretched on heavens high;

Nay, if thou can strip the skin off thine flesh,

Do it, for the lighter thy burden the better it be.

Sa'di, too, relates a relevant fable in the chapter 7 of his Gulistan, although it also aims at some other purpose:

I saw a rich mans son squatting by the side of his father's grave, and bragging thus before a darwish's son: 'My father's tomb is constructed of rare stones. Inside, it is paved with marble with enlaid turquois. And look at the one of your father's! An unbaked brick or two was fetched, on which a handful of earth was thrown.'

The sage's son heard these remarks and replied: 'Yet before your father is able to budge under the pile of those stones, my father would have reached the paradise itself.'

These are allegories underlining the significance of lightness and freedom from bondages, which is the essential condition for dynamism, nobility, and nimbleness. Leaps, movements, and struggles were achieved by individuals who were practically freer of bondages and attachments; that is, in some sense they were zahids. Gandhi, with his ascetic mode of life, brought the British imperialism to its knees. Ya'qub Layth Saffar, in his own words, 'did not set aside his diet of bread and onions until he became a terror for the caliph.' In our own times, the Vietcongs were such an example. Their surprising power of resistance was drawn from what in Islamic idiom has been called 'lightness of provisions'. A Vietcong could sustain for days in his shelter with a handful of rice and continue his battle with the enemy.

Which leader, religious or political, living in luxury and comfort has brought about drastic upheavals in world history? Which monarch who founded a dynasty, having transferred power from another family to his own, has been a lover of luxuries and comforts?

'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may peace be upon him, was the freest of the world's free men. He was a free man in the complete sense of the word, because he was a zahid in the profoundest sense of the word. 'Ali ('a), in the Nahj al-balaghah, lays great emphasis on renunciation of worldly pleasures and comforts as a means of liberation. In one of the hikam (aphorisms), he says:

Greed is everlasting slavery. [17]

In a sermon he describes the zuhd of Jesus ('a), the son of Mary, in these words:

He was free of any abasing greed. [18]

At another place he says:

The world is a place of transit, not a place to abide. Its people fall into two categories: those who sell away their souls into slavery, and those who ransom their souls and liberate them. [19]

In a letter to 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, 'Ali ('a) is more explicit than elsewhere. Towards the end of the letter, addressing the world and its pleasures, he reveals to us the philosophy of zuhd and the secrets of renunciation:

O world! Get away from me! I have thrown thy reins on thy shoulders, have freed myself from thy claws, and released myself from thy snares .... Go, get thee away! By God, I shall not surrender to thee so that thou should abase me! I shall not follow thee tractably that thou may control me and lead me wherever thou willeth.

Yes. 'Ali's zuhd is a rebellion against abasement and indignity on account of pleasures. It is a rebellion against human weakness and impotence before the tyranny of desires. It is a defiance of servitude to the world and obsequiousness before its charms.

Zuhd And Spirituality:

Zuhd, Love, and Worship:

Another fountainhead of zuhd and renunciation of hedonism is the aspiration to avail of spiritual bounties. Presently we do not intend to undertake any argument to the effect that man and the universe possess an undeniable spiritual aspect. It is another story by itself. It is evident that from a materialistic outlook of the world, the rejection of hedonism, materialism, and love of money and wealth as a prerequisite for acquisition of spiritual virtues is devoid of any meaning.

We have, here, nothing to say about the followers of materialism as a school of thought. At present, we address only those who have experienced the aroma of spirituality. For, anybody who has smelled its fragrance knows that as long as one does not liberate oneself from the bondage of desire, as long as the infant soul is not weaned away from the breasts of nature, and as long as the material aspects of life are seen as not being the ultimate end of life and are seen as means, the domain of the heart is not ready for the emergence of chaste emotions, majestic thoughts, and angelic feelings. That is why, it is said, that zuhd is the essential condition for exuberance of gnosis and is inalienably linked with it.

The worship of God, in its real sense, that is, ardour of love and zeal of devotion and service in the way of God, His constant presence in thoughts and His remembrance, the sense of delight and ecstasy in His adoration and worship-it is not at all compatible with self-adoration, hedonist attitude, and being captured by the glamour and charm of material things.

The need of zuhd is not characteristic solely of the worship of God; rather, every kind of love and adoration, whether it pertains to one's country, creed, conviction, or something else, calls for some kind of zuhd and indifference towards material aspects of life.

It is characteristic of love and adoration, as opposed to knowledge, science or philosophy, that they have to deal with the heart and as such do not tolerate any rivals. Nothing prevents a scientist or a philosopher who is enslaved to money and wealth from devoting and concentrating his intellectual powers, when necessary, on the study of the problems of philosophy, logic, physics, or mathematics. But it is not possible, at the same time, that his heart should be full to the brim with love, especially love of a spiritual nature, such as for humanity, or his religion and creed. Certainly, it cannot burn with the light of Divine love nor can it receive an enlightenment or inspiration of a Divine sort. Consequently, the essential condition for reception of spiritual grace and realization of authentic humanhood is purging the temple of the heart from every trace of materialistic attachments and exterminating from the Ka'bah of the heart all the idols of gold and silver and destroying them.

As we have said before, we should not be led to misinterpret freedom from the bondage of gold and silver, and indifference towards what these metals can be exchanged for, as monastic asceticism which is an attempt to evade responsibility and commitment. Instead, it is only in the light of such zuhd that responsibility and commitment reacquire their real significance and are no longer empty words without content and hollow claims. The personality of 'Ali, upon whom be peace, is a glorious example of it. In him zuhd and commitment were combined together. While he was a zahid who had renounced the world, at the same time, he had a heart that was most sensitive to the demands of social responsibility. On the one hand he used to say:

What has 'Ali to do with perishable niceties and short-lived pleasures. [20]

On the other hand, a small injustice or the sight of someone in distress was enough to snatch sleep from his eyes at nights. He was ready to go to bed with an empty stomach lest someone in his dominion might have remained hungry:

Shall I stuff my belly with delicious foods while in the Hijaz and Yamamah there may be people who have no hope of getting a loaf of bread or a full meal? [21]

There was a direct relation between that zuhd of his and this sensitiveness. Since 'Ali ('a) was a zahid, indifferent to the world and unselfish, with a heart that overflowed with the

exuberance of the love of God, he looked at the world, from the minutest particle to the greatest star, as a unit entrusted with responsibility and duty. That is why he was so sensitive towards the matters of social rights. Had he been a hedonist devoted to his own interests, he would never have been the responsible and committed person that he was.

The Islamic traditions are eloquent in regard to this philosophy of zuhd and the Nahj al-balaghah lays particular emphasis upon it. In a hadith, it is related from al-Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) that he said:

All hearts that harbour doubt or entertain shirk shall be inauthentic; that is why they adopted zuhd so that hearts may be emptied and made ready for the Hereafter. [23]

As can be seen from this tradition, every kind of hedonism and attachment to pleasures is considered shirk and contrary to the worship of the One God. Mawlana (Rumi) describes the zuhd of the 'arif in these words:

Zuhd means taking pains while sowing; Mystic knowledge (ma'rifah) is (care during) its cultivation; The 'arif is the soul of the Law and the spirit of taqwa; For mystic knowledge is the fruit of the labours of zuhd.

Abu 'Ali Ibn Sina, in the ninth namat of his al-'Isharat, which he devotes to the description of various stations of the mystics (maqamat al-'arifin), differentiates between the zuhd of the 'arif and that of the non-'arif. He writes:

The zahids who have no knowledge of the philosophy of zuhd, make a certain deal in their imagination: they barter the goods of the world for the goods of the Hereafter. They forego the enjoyments of the world in order that they may enjoy the pleasures of the Hereafter. In other words, they abstain here in order to indulge there. But an aware zahid, acquainted with the philosophy of zuhd, practises it because of his unwillingness to engage his inner self with anything other than God. Such a man, out of his self-respect, regards anything other than God to be unworthy of attention and servitude.

In another section of the same book where he discusses spiritual discipline, Ibn Sina says:

This training has three ends in view. First, removal of impediments from the path towards God; second, subjugation of the earnal self (al-nafs al-'ammarah) to the contented self (al-nafs al-mutma'innah), third, refinement of the inward (batin).

Then he proceeds to mention the effective means of realization of these three ends. He tells us that true zuhd helps in achieving the first of these objectives, that is, removal of impediments, the non-God, from the way.

The Contradiction Between the World and the Hereafter:

The problem of the conflict between the world and the Hereafter and the contradiction between them as two opposite poles, such as the north and the south, which are such that proximity to the one means remoteness from the other-is related to the world of human heart, conscience, human attachment, love and worship. God has not given two hearts to man:

God has not assigned to any man two hearts within his breast. (33:4)

With one heart one cannot choose two beloveds. That is why once when questioned about his old and worn-out clothes, 'Ali ('a) replied:

These make the heart humble, subdue the self, and induce the believers to follow it as an example. [23]

That is, those who have no new clothes to wear are not ashamed to put on old and worn-out dress. They no longer feel humiliation on their account for they see that their leader himself hasn't put on any better. Then 'Ali ('a) goes on to add that the world and the Hereafter are like two irreconcilable enemies. They are two divergent paths. Anyone who loves the world and chooses its bondage is, by nature, led to loathe the Hereafter and detest everything that is related to it. The world and the Hereafter are like the east and the west, the north and the south. Anyone who approaches the one gets farther from the other. They are like two wives.

In one of his epistles, he writes:

I swear by God that, God willing, I shall so discipline my own self that it would rejoice to have a single loaf of bread for eating and be content with only salt to season it. (In prayer) I shall empty my eyes of tears until they become like dried up springs. The cattle fill their stomachs on the pasture and lie down to repose. The goats graze, devour green herbs, and enter their enclosures. Should 'Ali in a similar manner swallow whatever he ean lay his hands on and lie down to doze'? Congratulations! For, if he does that' after long years he has chosen to follow the wild grazing animals and the cattle led out to pasture. [24]

Then he goes on to add:

Happy is the man who fulfils his duties to God and overcomes hardships like a mill grinding the grain, who allows himself no sleep at nights and when it overpowers him lies down on the ground with his hand for a pillow. He is accompanied by those who keep their eyes awake in fear of the Day of Judgement, whose bodies are ever away from their beds, whose lips constantly hum in the Lord's remembrance, whose sins have been erased by prolonged supplications for forgiveness. They are the party of Allah; why surely Allah's party-they are

the prosperers. (58:22) [25]

The two passages quoted above completely illustrate the relation-ship between zuhd and spirituality. To sum up, one has to choose one of the two paths; either to drink, eat, browse and hanker after sensual pleasures in utter indifference to the secrets of the spirit, to avoid the agonies of love and its tears, to speak not of enlightenment and progress, not to take a step beyond the threshold of bestiality; or to resolve on a journey into the valley of authentic humanhood, towards the effulgence and-exuberance of Divine grace which descends upon chaste hearts and enlightened souls.

Zuhd: Minimum of Intake for Maximum Output:

Some days ago I was in Isfahan on a visit for a few days. During it, in a gathering of the learned, a discussion started about zuhd. The various aspects of it were scrutinized in the light of the multifaceted teachings of Islam. Everyone wanted to find a comprehensive and articulate definition of zuhd. Among them a learned high school teacher, [27] who (I later came to know, that he was writing a treatise on the subject, the manuscript of which he showed me later) suggested a wonderfully eloquent definition of zuhd. He said:

Islamic zuhd is minimizing the intake and maximizing the output.

This definition fascinated me and I saw that it was in conformity with my own earlier understanding and the conclusions that I have drawn in the foregoing chapters. Here I, with the permission of that learned man, making a little amendment in his definition, would say:

Zuhd in Islam means drawing a minimum of intake for the sake of maximizing the output.

That is, there exists a relation between drawing as little as possible of material benefits of life on the one hand and aiming at maximizing one's output on the other. Human 'outputs', whether in the sphere of the actualization of one's potentialities, whether on the level of emotion and morality, or from the point of view of individuals role in social co-operation and mutual help, or from the aspect of realizing spiritual edification and refinement, all in all have a converse relationship to his intake of material benefits.

It is a human characteristic that the greater one's enjoyment of material benefits and indulgence in such things as pleasures, luxuries, and affluence, the greater is one's weakness, indignity, impotence, sterility, and impoverishment. Conversely, abstinence from indulgent and extravagant enjoyment of nature-of course, within definite limits-refines and purifies human nature and invigorates and strengthens two of the highest of all human powers: thought and will .

It is true only of animals that greater benefit from the possibilities provided by nature

contributes to their animal development and perfection. Even in animals it is not applicable when we consider what is called the 'merit' desirable in a beast. For example, sheep and cattle which are reared for obtaining greater amount of meat, milk, or fleece should be given greater attention and care and fed well. However, this is not true of a race horse. It is impossible for a common stable horse to show any good performance in a race. The horse which has to run and win races is given days or rather months of training with a controlled diet until its body becomes lean and nimble, shedding all its excessive fat so that it can acquire the desirable agility and speed or the 'excellence' of which it is capable.

Zuhd is also an exercise and discipline for man. But it is the exercise of the soul. Through zuhd the soul is disciplined; shedding all excessive appendages, and becoming, as a result, light, agile, and nimble, it takes an easy flight into the skies of spiritual merits.

Incidentally, 'Ali ('a) also describes taqwa and zuhd as 'exercise' and practice. The word riyadah originally meant exercising horses intended for racing. Physical exercise is also called riyadah. 'Ali ('a) says:

Indeed, as to my self, I shall exercise it and discipline it through taqwa. [27]

What about plant life? Like animals that which may be, loosely speaking, called the merit of a tree or shrub is its capacity to thrive with a minimum amount of nourishment from nature. 'Ali ('a), also, makes an allusion to this point in one of his letters to his governors. In that letter, after describing his own ascetic life-style, characterized by a minimum of consumption, 'Ali ('a) encourages him to emulate it. He says:

I can already anticipate your criticism. Someone might say that if this is what the son of Abu Talib eats then weakness should have made him unfit for an encounter with the enemy's warriors. Remember the untended tree that thrives in the harsh conditions of the desert-its wood is firm and tough; even the fire lit from it is more enduring and fierce.

This law, which applies to all living things, is more effective in the case of man because of the various characteristics special to him which are summed up under the term 'human personality'. [28]

The word 'zuhd', despite its sublime human meaning, has suffered an evil fate, and is fiercely denounced particularly in our own times. Sometimes, the term is advertently or otherwise misinterpreted; some-times it is equated with sanctimoniousness and show of piety; at other times, it is considered equivalent to monasticism and ascetic seclusion. Everybody is free to coin terms of his own with any meaning of his own choice. But no one has the right to condemn any concept or term by imparting to it a wrong and misconceived meaning and sense. In its system of ethics and education, Islam has used a certain term, zuhd. The Nahj al-balaghah and the Islamic tradition are replete with it. Before we make any judgement about

zuhd in Islam, first, before everything, we must understand its Islamic connotation. The meaning of zuhd in Islam is what we have tried to explain, and the philosophy behind it is what we have discussed in the light of Islamic texts. If anyone finds any fault with this meaning and philosophy, let him inform me so that I too might be benefited.

What school of thought and what kind of logic can justify monasticism? What school of thought can recommend and justify the worship of money, consumerism, love of goods, lust for position, or-to use an expression which includes them all-worldliness? Is it possible for man to be the slave and prisoner of material things-or in the words of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a), 'the slave of the world and the slave of him who exercises control over it'-and yet speak of 'human personality'?

Here, it would not be out of place to cite the views of a Marxist writer about the relation between love of money and human personality. In a useful and concise book regarding capitalist and Marxist economies, he points out the moral consequences of the power of money for society. He writes:

The extraordinary power of 'gold' over our contemporary society is something deeply detested by men of sensitive nature. Men in search of truth have always expressed their strong aversion towards this filthy metal, and consider it to be the main cause of corruption in contemporary society. However, those little round pieces of a shining yellow metal called 'gold' are really not to be blamed. The power and domination of money as a general manifestation of power and authority of things over man is the essential characteristic of a disorderly economy based on barter and exchange. In the same way as the uncivilized man of ancient times adored and worshipped idols made by his own hands, the contemporary man also worships the product of his own labour, and his life is overwhelmed by the power of things he has made with his own hands. In order that the worship of consumer goods and the worship of money, which is the filthiest form evolved of idolatry, may be completely eradicated, the social causes which brought them into existence should be eliminated and the society should be so organized that the power and authority of the little coins of this yellow brilliant metal would be thoroughly obliterated. In such an organization of society, things will no more wield their present power over human beings. On the other hand, man's power and predominance over things shall be absolute and according to a preconceived scheme. Then worship of money and things shall give their place to honour and reverence for the human personality.

We agree with the author that the power of things over man, and in particular the authority of money, is opposed to the demands of human dignity and nobility, and is as condemnable as idolatry. However, we do not agree with his suggested exclusive prescription for solution of this problem.

Here we are not concerned with the question whether collective ownership is preferable from

a social or economic point of view. Nevertheless, morally speaking, this suggestion, instead of redeeming society's spirit of honesty, eliminates right away the very object of honesty!

Man can reclaim his identity only by liberating himself from the power of money and by bringing money under his own control. True human personality can emerge when the danger of money and goods remains possible without overcoming man, who is not ruled by them but rules them. This kind of personality is what Islam calls zuhd.

In the educational system of Islam, man regains his personality without the need to obliterate the right of property. Those who are trained in the school of Islamic teachings are equipped with the power of zuhd. They strip money and goods of their power and subjugate them to their own authority.

Notes:

[1] Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 51 pp. 88-89

[2] Ibid., Khutab 16

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., Khutab 114

[5] Ibid., Khutab 191

[6] Ibid., Khutab 157

[7] See Guftar e mah, vol. I, the second speech

[8] Ibid., Khutab 191

[9] Ibid.,

[10] Bihar al Anwar, vol. XV Bab al nahy an al rahbaniyyah wa al siyahah. Rumi in the sixth part of his Mathnawi, refers to this tradition in the story of the bird and the hunter.

[11] This is a reference to to Khutab No. 3 p. 50

[12] Ibid,. Khutab 209

[13]Ibid., Khutab 45

[14] Ibid.,

[15] Ibid., Khutab 209

[16] Bihar al-anwar (Tabriz)(Vol IX. p. 758)

[17] Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam,No. 103

[18] Ibid, Khutab, No. 160

[19] Ibid, Khutab, No. 133

[20] Ibid, Khutab, No. 224

[21] Ibid, Kutub, No. 45

[22] al Kulayni, al Kafi, vol. III p 194-5

[23] Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. 103

[24] Ibid., Kutub, No. 45

[25] Ibid., 420

[26] The person referred here is Akbar Parwarish

[27] Ibid., Kutub 45

[28] Usul e Iqtisad e Nuhsin, "Shakl e arzish e pul".

Al-Tawhid

The Glimpses of Nahj al Balaghah

Murtadha Mutahhari

Translated from Persian by Ali Quli Qara'i

Renunciation in the Nahj al-balaghah:

Of the frequent themes of the Nahj al-balaghah is strong warning against the dangers of worldliness. Our preceding discussion about zuhd (abstinence) and its aims also serves here to throw light on the meaning of worldliness; because, the zuhd which is strongly enjoined is the very opposite of the worldliness which is severely condemned. To define and explain any one of them is to define and explain the other. However, in view of the tremendous emphasis laid in 'Ali's moral sermons upon the warning against the dangers of worldliness, we considered it appropriate to devote a separate chapter to this topic with a view to further explaining this concept so that all ambiguities are removed in this matter.

The first point to be investigated is why so much attention has been given to the concept of zuhd in the sayings and sermons of Amir al-Mu'minin, to the extent that no other issue has been so much emphasized by him, and neither the Holy Prophet (S) nor any of the other Imams (A) have spoken as recurringly about the deceptions of worldly life, its ephemeral and unenduring nature, the disloyalty of its slippery comforts, and the dangers of wealth, affluence, and immersion in and complete surrender to worldly pleasures and comforts.

The Danger Created by War Booty:

This was not a matter of accident, rather it was something related to the conditions that came into existence during 'Ali's times, that is, during the days of the past caliphs and especially during the caliphate of 'Uthman. A series of serious dangers visited the world of Islam in the wake of the influx of huge quantities of wealth and riches. 'Ali (A) sensed its dangerous consequences and struggled against them. This struggle is reflected in his practices and

policies during the period of his caliphate, in the course of which he ultimately gave up his life. This struggle, at the ideological level, is also reflected in his sermons, letters, and sayings.

The Muslims were blessed with great victories in battles that diverted huge amounts of property and wealth into the Muslim world. However, instead of being utilized for public benefit or being distributed justly among the people, the wealth fell into the hands of a few individuals and an elite. Especially during the days of 'Uthman, this imbalance became greatly pronounced. Persons who possessed nothing only a few years ago appropriated for their personal use fabulous amounts of wealth. This was the time when worldly tendencies gained strength in the Muslim society and the Muslim Ummah started on a course of moral decline and degeneration.

It was following the awareness of this great danger to society that 'Ali raised his cry of protest to warn the Ummah of Islam. Al-Mas'udi, writing about the days of 'Uthman, says:

'Uthman was a man of extraordinary generosity (of course, it was exercised at the cost of the public treasury). The government officials and the people followed his example. He was the first among the Caliphs to build a house made of stone and mortar with wooden doors made of teak and juniper, and amassed other properties, such as gardens, orchards, and springs, in al-Madinah. When he died, there were 150,000 Dinars and a million Dirhams in cash with his treasurer and his property in Wadi al-Qura, Hunayn, and elsewhere was valued above 100,000 Dinars. His legacy consisted of a large number of horses and camels.

Then he writes:

During his reign, a group of his associates also hoarded similar amounts of wealth. Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam built a house in Basrah which still stands intact in the year 332 H. [al-Mas'udi's own time]. It is also well known that he built similar houses in Egypt, Kufah, and Alexandria. When al-Zubayr died he left 50,000 Dinars in cash, a thousand horses and thousands of other things. The house which Talhah ibn 'Abd Allah built of brick, mortar and teak in Kufah still exists and is known as 'Dar al-Talhatayn.' Talhah's daily income from his properties in Iraq was one thousand Dinars. He had one thousand horses in his stables. A one-thirty-second (1/32) part of the wealth that he left at his death was estimated at 84,000 Dinars ...

Al-Mas'udi mentions similar amounts of wealth in the possession of Zayd ibn Thabit, Ya'la ibn 'Umayyah and others. Evidently, such huge amounts of wealth do not emerge from under the ground nor fall from the sky. Such immense riches are never amassed except by the side of extreme and horrifying poverty. That is why 'Ali (A), in sermon 129, after warning the people of the dangers of worldliness, says:

You live in a period when virtues recede and evils advance step by step, and the Satan becomes greedier in his eagerness to ruin human beings. Today his equipment has been reinforced, his traps are set in every place, and his prey comes easily. Look around; you will see either a poor man hardly able to breathe in extreme poverty and penury, or a rich man who has transformed God's blessings into his own infidelity, or you will see a miser who makes stinginess in discharging the obligations imposed by God a means of increasing his own wealth, or you will find the rebellious whose unruly hearts are deaf to moral admonition. Where are the virtuous, the righteous amongst you? Where are the free men and the magnanimous? Where are those who avoid every trace of deceit in their dealings and pursue piety and honesty in their ways?

The Intoxication of Affluence:

Amir al-Mu'minin (A), in his utterances, has used the phrase sakarat al-ni'mah, meaning 'intoxication induced by comfort and affluence', which is inevitably followed by a vengeful disaster. In sermon 151 he warns them:

You, O people of Arabia, would be victims of calamities which are drawing near. Beware of the intoxication induced by affluence and fear the vengeful disaster which will follow it.

Then he describes the misfortunes caused by such immoderations. In sermon 187 he foretells the calamities that were to befall the Muslim society in future. He says:

This would happen when you would be intoxicated, not by drinking wine, but with wealth and affluence.

Yes, the flow of immense amounts of wealth into the domain of Islam and the unjust distribution of this wealth together with nepotism and partiality, infected the Islamic society with the disease of worldliness and the race for affluence.

'Ali (A) struggled to save the Islamic world from this grave danger, and was severely critical of those who were responsible for the infection to set in. He set an example of an altogether different life style in his own personal living, and, on attaining caliphate, he gave the top priority to the campaign against these dangers in his revolutionary programme.

The General Aspect of 'Ali's Warnings:

This prologue was intended to throw light upon the particular aspect of the warnings of Amir al-Mu'minin (A) about worldliness as a specific reaction to a particular social phenomenon of his times. Yet, aside from this particular feature, there is a general aspect to 'Ali's words that is not confined to his own time and applies to all times and all people as an essential part of

Islamic teaching. This specific logic emanates from the teaching of the Holy Quran which is followed up in the sayings of the Holy Prophet (S), Amir al-Mu'minin (A) and the rest of Imams (A), as well as in the writings of great Muslim sages. However, it is a logic which needs a detailed analysis. In the present discussion, our concern will be more with the general aspect of the discourses of Amir al-Mu'minin (A) in the sense that in them 'Ali (A) addresses himself to all human beings of all times.

The Terminology of Every School:

Every school of thought has a terminology which is specific to it. In order to understand the concepts and issues of a certain school, it is essential to be familiar with its terms. On the other hand, in order to understand its particular terminology, it is necessary, in the first place, to understand its general view of the universe, life and man: that is its weltanschauung.

Islam has a clear view of being and creation, and has a particular way of looking at man and human life. One of the fundamental principles of the Islamic world-outlook is the notion that there is no duality of any kind whatsoever in being; that is, the world of creation is not divisible into two domains of 'good' and 'evil'. That is, it is not true that some existents are good and beautiful and should have been created, whereas some are evil and ugly and should not have been created but nevertheless exist. Such a view is regarded as kufr in the Islamic world-outlook, and is considered contrary to the principle of tawhid. In the view of Islam, the creation of all things is based on goodness, wisdom, and beauty:

Thou seest not in the creation of the All-merciful any imperfection ...(67:3)

He is the Knower of the unseen and the visible, the All-mighty, the All-compassionate, Who made good everything He created; ... (32:6-7)

Accordingly, Islam's condemnation of 'the world' does not apply to the world of creation. The Islamic world-outlook rests on the foundation of pure tawhid and lays great emphasis on the Unity of the Acting Principle; it does not admit the existence of any partner who would share God's sovereignty. Such a world-outlook can never be pessimistic. The idea of an evil world abounding in crookedness and wickedness is not an Islamic notion. Then why does it denounce 'the world'?

The 'World ' that is Condemned:

Commonly it is said that attachment to the 'world' is condemned and disapproved by Islam. This is both true and false. If what is implied is an emotional attachment, it cannot be true; because, man, in relation to the total system of creation, has been created with a series of congenital emotional attachments and inclinations. In addition, he does not acquire these inclinations, nor are they superfluous or incongruous. Even as in the human body there is no

superfluous organ-not even a single nerve ending-so also there are no redundant congenital tendencies of attachment in his nature. All innate human tendencies, and aptitudes have a purpose which is wise and sagacious. The Holy Quran regards such tendencies as the 'signs' of Divine Wisdom and the Creator's consummate design:

And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, that you might repose in them, and He has set between you love and mercy ... (30:21)

These attachments and sentiments form a series of channels of communication between man and his world. Without them man would not be able to pursue the course of his development. Consequently, it should be said that the Islamic world-outlook, even as it does not permit us to denounce and reject the world, it also does allow us to regard the natural attachments and the channels of communication as superfluous, useless, and breakable, because such sentiments and tendencies are a part of the general pattern of creation. In fact, the prophets (A) and the awliya' were endowed with these sentiments and emotions to a high degree of exuberance.

The truth is that what is implied by 'attachment to the world' are not these natural and innate inclinations; instead, what is meant is bondage to material and worldly affairs and total surrender to them, which leads to spiritual stagnation and inertia, deprives the human spirit of its freedom of movement and buoyancy, and makes it immobile and dead. That is what Islam calls 'worldliness' and has severely campaigned against it as something contrary to the evolutionary system of creation. Not only this, Islam considers this struggle as being in tune with the laws of the evolutionary processes of creation. The expressions employed by the Quran in this regard are miraculous, as we shall explain in the following sections.

The Relation Between Man and the World:

As made explicit in the last chapter, that which is regarded as disapprovable by the Quran and the Nahj al-balaighah is neither the world-in-itself, nor the natural and innate human urges and attachments. In the view of Islam, neither has the world been created without a purpose, nor has man strayed into it aimlessly.

There have been, and are, some schools of thought which view the world with pessimism. In their view, the existing order of the universe is far from being perfect. There have existed other schools which considered man's entry into the world of existence to be the result of some cosmic error, as if man had strayed into it. According to them, man is a total stranger in this world with which he has no ties of consanguinity, and is a prisoner of existence. Like Joseph, he has been thrown into the black-hole of being by his evil brethren where he is confined and his every endeavour should be aimed at finding an exit from this abyss.

Obviously, when the relation of man to the world and nature is regarded as the one between a

prison and its prisoner, and an abyss and one eptrapped in it, his ultimate aim cannot be anything but seeking 'deliverance'.

The Logic of Islam:

But from the viewpoint of Islam, the relation of man to the world is not that of a prisoner with his prison; or that of one entrapped in a well with the well; rather it is the kind of relation that exists between a peasant and his farm [1] , or a horse and the racecourse [2] , or a merchant and the marketplace [3] , or a devotee and his temple [4]. The world, from the Islamic point of view, is a school for man, his training ground, and the place where he can acquire perfection.

There is an anecdote related in the Nahj al-balaghah of a man who condemned the world in Amir al-Mu'minin's presence. 'Ali (A) rebuked him for his confusing 'the world' which is condemned by Islam with the actual physical world and informed him about his error [5]. Shaykh Farid al-Din 'Attar has rendered this incident into verse in his Musibat nameh:

In the presence of the Tiger of Providence,

A man denounced the world with vehemence.

"The world ", exclaimed Hayder, "is not to be blamed ".

Wretched are you, being far from wisdom.

The world, son, is a farm To be attended to day and night.

Whatsoever is of the honour and riches of faith,

An in all it is to be acquired from this world.

Tomorrow's fruit is the blooming of today's seed;

And one who is idle here, shall taste the bitter fruit of regret.

The world is the best place for you,

Where in you can prepare provision for the Hereafter.

Go into the world, but don 't get immersed in the ego.

And prepare yourself for the other world.

If you act thus, the world will suit you,

Hence befriend the world just for this aim.

Nasir Khusrow 'Alawi, justifiably considered a philosopher among the poets (Hakim al-shu'ara'), is one of the most profound and truly religious amongst Persian poets. He has composed a eulogy about the world, simultaneously highlighting both the good and evil qualities of it, which is as much in conformity with the Islamic outlook as it is extraordinarily beautiful from artistic viewpoint. This eulogy appears in his collected poetical works (diwan), and is included in his book Jami' al-hitmatayn. He says:

O world, how apt and essential you are,

Even though you haven't been loyal to any.

Sick and wretched you appear to the afflicted eye,

Yet fine and healthy if one looks at your inside.

If sometimes you have broken a robust man or two,

Many a broken one you have joined and restored.

You are filthy to the unclean,

To the pure unstained.

If any one should blame you, say,

"You know me not. "

You have grown out of me.

If you are wise,

Why blame the tree of which you are a branch?

The Lord made me a path for your ascending journey,

And you have settled down on this lowly road.

God planted a tree from whose trunk you have grown;

If you grow out straight, you will be saved,

And if crooked, confined to the flames.

Yes, everyone burns crooked branches,

And asks not "Is it teak or walnut?"

You are the arrow of God aimed at His enemy,

Why have you hurt yourself with this weapon?

Now it is evident that man's relation to the world is similar to the one that exists between the farmer and his field of cultivation, between the merchant and the marketplace, between the devotee and the temple. It is not possible for man to alienate himself from the world or sever his ties with it or to develop a kind of relationship which is wholly negative. There exists a design and intelligent planning behind every natural urge. Man has neither come to this world

by cheating or fraud, nor should he go from here as an accused.

There is a general force of attraction and gravitation that encompasses the whole universe. All the particles in it attract each other according to a set pattern. This pattern of mutual attraction and absorption is determined by a judicious design. Moreover, the force of attraction and love is not confined to man alone. No particle in the universe is devoid of this power. The difference, however, is that man, contrary to other things, is aware of his own leanings and inclinations.

Wahshi Kirmani says:

Every dancing particle is permeated with the same force of attraction

That draws it towards a certain specific goal.

It carries one Rower to the side of another,

And urges one spark to pursue the company of its likes,

From fire to wind, from water to dust,

From underneath the moon to the top of the heavens,

From flock to flock and from horde to horde,

You will observe this attraction in every moving thing

From heavenly spheres to the terrestrial bodies.

Accordingly, from the viewpoint of Islam the world is neither without a purpose nor is human being created by any error, nor are man's innate tendencies undesirable and evil. Then what is

meant by "the world" that the Quran and the Nahj al-balaghah regard as undesirable and condemnable?

Before embarking on the issue, a few preliminary principles need to be clarified. It is characteristic of man that he is inherently an idealist and a lover of perfection. He is in the search of something with which he wants to develop a relationship closer than an ordinary attachment. In other words, he is by nature a devotee and a worshipper in search of something which is the ultimate object of his desire and the end of his entire being.

However, if he is not rightly guided, or not on his guard, his relation with things and inclination towards them is transformed into a relation of reliance and attachment, changing means into end and an association into bondage. As a result his spirit of mobility, freedom and capacity to quest are transformed into inertia, complacence and captivity.

This is what is undesirable and contrary to the perfection-seeking order of the world. It is a defect and a kind of non-being, not a merit or a positive mode of being. It is a dangerous malady and a disaster for man, and this is against which the Quran and the Nahj al-balaghah warn.

Without any doubt, Islam does not regard the material world and life in it-even if it involves the greatest material achievements-as a fitting goal of man's highest aspirations. This is because, firstly, in the Islamic world-outlook, this world is followed by the eternal and everlasting world of the Hereafter where conditions of life would be determined by the deeds, good or evil, of a person in this world. Secondly, the worth of a human being is too great to warrant his surrender to the slavery of and servitude to the material aspects of life.

That is why 'Ali (A) so often points out that the world is a good place, but only for him who knows that it is not a permanent abode, but only a road or a caravanserai.

What a good abode it is for him who would not want to make it a home. [6]

This world indeed is a transit camp, whereas the Hereafter is a place of permanent abode. So take from the transit what you need for your destination. [7]

From the viewpoint of humanistic philosophies there is no doubt that everything which binds man to itself and immerses him completely within itself violates his human identity by making it inert and frozen. The process of human perfection knows no limit or end, and every halt, delay and bondage is injurious to it. As we find no reason to controvert this view, we accept it without any argument. However, there are two other points that need to be discussed here.

Firstly, does the Quran and following it the Nahj al-balaghah confirm such a relation between

man and his world? Is it true that what the Quran condemns is attachment and bondage to the world when taken as the ultimate end of life, an attitude which retards man's movement towards perfection and represents inertness, stagnation, and non-being? Does the Quran abstain from absolutely condemning worldly ties and sentiments so long as they do not become man's ultimate goal of life and stall his progress?

Secondly, if it is admitted that human attachment to beings other than himself causes bondage and servitude, and retards the development of human personality, does it make any difference if that being is God or something else?

The Quran negates every form of bondage and servitude and calls man to welcome every kind of spiritual and human freedom. It does not, however, condemn servitude to God; it does not invite man to liberate himself from God in order to acquire absolute freedom. Instead, the invitation of the Quran is based on liberation from everything besides God and complete surrender to Him. It is based on the rejection of obedience to anything except Him and the acceptance of submission to Him.

The expression 'La ilaha illa Allah' (There is no god except Allah) is the foundation of the Islamic faith. It implies simultaneously a negation and an affirmation, a rejection and an acceptance, and kufr and iman. It signifies the negation, the rejection, the renunciation, and the kufr in relation to the non-God, and the affirmation, the acceptance, the submission, and the iman in relation to God. The essential testimony required by Islam is neither just a 'Yes' nor merely a 'No'; it is a combination of both a 'Yes' and a 'No'.

If the needs of the growth of the human personality demand that man should liberate himself from every kind of bondage, servitude, and submissiveness to anything whatsoever, that he should revolt against everything that compromises his absolute freedom, that he ought to say 'No' to everything-as the Existentialists say-what difference does it make whether that thing is God or something else? And if it is to be decided that man should renounce his freedom and adopt slavery, servitude and submission to something, what difference does it make, after all, whether it is God or something else?

Is there a difference between accepting God as the supreme ideal and accepting some other thing as the Summum Bonum? Does it mean that only God is such that servitude to Him is freedom in itself, and that losing oneself in Him is identical with the realization of one's self and the recovery of one's true identity and personality? And if this is true, what is the basis of this claim? How can it be justified?

In our opinion, here we arrive at one of the subtlest, most profound, and progressive teachings of Islam and one of the most glorious of human ideas. It is here that the sublimity of the logic of Islam and the insignificance and pettiness of other ideologies becomes evident. We shall answer these queries in the following sections.

'The World' in the Quran and the Nahj al-balaghah:

In the last chapter we said that that which is execrable from the viewpoint of Islam in regard to man's relation with the world is that it should grow to the extent of becoming a malady and an affliction of the human soul. It is the bondage and the enslaving attachment to the world against which Islam has waged an unrelenting struggle considering it as undesirable, not the mere relation and attachment with it. It is the life of captivity that is condemnable, not the life of freedom. The world is rejected as a goal and objective and not as a way or a means.

If the relation of man to the world develops into his servitude and subjugation, it leads to the negation and obliteration of all higher human values; man's worth lies in the greatness of his pursued ends and objectives. Obviously, if, for instance, his ultimate objectives do not go beyond filling his belly to satisfaction, and if all his efforts and aspirations were to revolve around his stomach, his worth will not surpass that of his stomach. That is why 'Ali (A) says: "The worth of a man whose only aim is to stuff his belly is equal to that which is excreted from it."

The question is what kind of relation is appropriate between the human being and the world and what form should it have. In one kind of relation, his personality is effaced and sacrificed to things, and since the worth of anyone in pursuit of an objective is lower than the objective itself, he is, to use a Quranic expression, bound to sink to the level of 'the lowest of the low' (asfal al-safilin), becoming thereby the most abject, degenerate and the most contemptible creature in the world. He, then, loses not only his higher values but also his human identity. In the other kind of relation the world and worldly things are sacrificed at the altar of his humanity and are used to serve man while he reclaims his higher ideals. That is why it has been said in a hadith-e qudsi:

O son of Adam! I have created everything for thy sake,

but I have created thee for My Own Self.

We have already cited two passages from the Nahj al-balaghah indicating its position in denouncing the degenerate and distorted kind of relationship between man and the world of nature that leads to man's servitude and bondage. Here we shall quote a few verses from the Quran to endorse this viewpoint, and return to the Nahj al-balaghah for further relevant references.

The Quranic verses relating to man and the world are of two kinds: the first group of verses is of an introductory nature; that is, it lays the ground for the second group of verses. In truth, the first group can be regarded as representing the major and the minor premises of a syllogism of which the second group constitutes the conclusion.

The first set of verses consists of those which emphasize the changeability, the inconstancy and the ephemeral nature of this world. In these verses the reality of material objects is depicted as being changeable, fleeting, and transitory. For instance, the world is compared to the vegetation that sprouts from the ground. In the beginning it is green and flourishing but little by little turns yellow, shrivels, and ultimately dries up. Then the elements break it into bits and scatter it into the wind. Such is life in the present world.

Obviously, whether man should like it or not his physical life is not much more durable than that of the reed, and is subject to a similar fate. If man must base his outlook on reality and not on fancy and if it is only through the discovery of truth and not by flight of imagination and hallucinations that he can hope to attain felicity and true happiness, then he should not forget this truth.

This set of verses constitutes a kind of a background argument for denying the importance of material things as ultimate ideals worthy of man's adoration. These verses are followed immediately by the reminder that man should know that there exists another world which is eternal and everlasting. Don't imagine that the present life is everything that there is; and since it is not worthy of man, do not conclude that life is futile and meaningless, they remind.

The second set of verses illuminates the solution to the problem of man's relation to the world. It can be clearly seen from these verses that the execrable form of relation is one that grows to the extent of becoming a bondage, requiring man's submission, willing surrender and servitude to the transitory things of the world. It is in these verses that the crux of the Quran's logic comes to light:

1. Wealth and sons are the adornment of the worldly life; but the abiding things, the deeds of righteousness (which survive one's death and continue to benefit other people), are better with God in reward and better in hope. (18:46)

This verse, as can be seen, speaks of the ultimate aspiration of man. His ultimate aspiration is the thing for which he lives and without which life has no meaning in his eyes.

2. Surely those who look not to encounter Us and are well-pleased with the present life and are at rest in it, and those who are heedless of Our signs, those-their refuge is the Fire, for that they have been earning. (10:7-8)

   In this verse, that which is considered execrable is the absence of hope in the next life and the satisfaction and contentment with material things.

3. So turn thou from him who turns away from Our remembrance, and desires only the present life. That is their attainment of knowledge ... (53:29-30)

4. And they rejoice in this world's life; and this world's life is nothing compared with the Hereafter but a temporary enjoyment. (13:26)

5. They know an outward part of the present life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless. (30:7)

There are many other verses which have a similar meaning. In all of them the same theme recurs, that is the negation of the world as the goal and ideal of man's highest aspirations and the ultimate object of his desire, and the only source of his happiness and delight. It is held that this form of relation between man and the world, instead of putting the world at man's disposal, sacrifices man to it and dispossesses him of his humanity.

In the Nahj al-balaghah as in the Quran we encounter a similar twofold argument. In the first set of statements the transitory nature of the world is depicted in profound, forceful metaphors, allegories and parables put in precise and elegant phrases which follow one another in an absorbing rhythm. In the second category, conclusions are drawn which are exactly the same as those derived by the Quran.

In Khutbah 32, people are at first divided into two categories: the worldly and the otherworldly. The worldly people are again divided into four groups.

In the first group are put those who are meek and tractable like sheep. They are the most innocuous of creatures, never seen to commit any overt injustice or aggression, or covert deceit or subversion. Not that they detest such things but because they lack the power and daring to carry them out.

To the second category belong those who possess both the power and the daring to carry out such ambitions. They muster their will to amass money and wealth, to acquire power and authority, or to occupy important posts and offices and do not stop short of any degree of perverseness.

Those belonging to the third group are wolves in the skins of sheep. They are slaves of the world in the garb of the otherworldly and the pious. They, sanctimoniously, hang their heads in affected humility, walk with the slow steps of a sage and dress like the devout. Through their hypocrisy they win the confidence of the people and become their most confident trustees.

To the fourth group belong those whose hearts burn regretfully with the fire of ambition but their feeling of inferiority has forced them to retire to seclusion. They put on the dress of piety and zuhd in order to conceal their deep sense of inferiority and dejection.

All the four kinds of people, regardless of the diverse degrees of their success and failure, are regarded by 'Ali (A) to constitute, spiritually, a single class on account of their commonly shared attitude: worldliness. Why? Because all of them have one common characteristic: they are like the unfortunate birds whom the world has made its prey one way or another. Captured, they enjoy no longer the freedom of flight. They are slaves and prisoners of the world.

In the same sermon, 'Ali (A) describes the qualities of the other-worldly, the opposite group, and says:

Evil is the barter of those who purchase this world at the cost of their souls.

In the eyes of 'Ali (A) the whole world with everything in it is too inferior to be the price of a man's humanity; hence it ends in the great loss of one who exchanges it for his human identity. Nasir Khusrow has the same theme in mind, when he says:

Never shall I fall an easy prey to the world,

For no more do its woes burden my heart.

In fact, I am the hunter and the world my prey,

Though once it did pursue me on its hunt.

Though many a man has fallen pierced by its arrows,

The world could not make me a target.

My soul flies over the world's tides,

And no more do I worry about its waves and tides.

This theme that one should never sacrifice one's humanity for anything in the world is a theme that recurs a lot in the sayings of the leaders of the Islamic faith. Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A) in his famous will to al-'Imam al-Hasan (A) which is included in the section of Kutub (letters) in the Nahj al-balaghah, says:

Keep your self above every contemptible thing, because, whatever it should be, it is not worth the compromise of your self.

In the account of his life given in the Bihar al-'anwar, al-'Imam Ja'far al Sadiq (A) is reported to have said:

The price of my soul is (the good-pleasure of) its Lord The whole of creation doesn 't equal its worth.

In the Tuhaf al-'uqul, the following tradition is recorded:

Al-'Imam al-Sajjad (A) was asked, 'Who is the most important among people?' He replied, 'The one who does not regard the whole world to be equal to his worth.'

There are many traditions which deal with a similar theme, but we shall abstain from quoting more for the sake of brevity.

A close study of the Quran, the Nahj al-balaghah, and the sayings of other religious leaders, will reveal that Islam has not depreciated the world; rather it has elevated the station and

worth of the human being as compared to it. For Islam, the world is for the sake of man and not the other way round. It aims to revive human values, not to disparage the world.

Freedom and Bondage:

Our discussion about the meaning of 'worldliness' in the Nahj al-balaghah has become somewhat drawn out. However, one issue, which cannot be omitted, remains unanswered. We raised it earlier in the form of a question which we had promised to answer later. The question was this: If attachment and bondage to anything is a kind of unhealthy condition that leads to abandonment of human values and cause stagnation, inertness, and inertia of the human personality, what difference does it make whether that thing is something material or spiritual, this worldly or otherworldly, or, as goes the saying, 'the Lord or the apple'? It may be said that if the aim of Islam by prohibiting attachment and warning against bondage to temporal things is to safeguard the human being's identity and to rescue him from servitude and to protect him from stagnating and vegetating in life, it should have encouraged man to acquire absolute freedom and to consider every thing that compromises and confines it as kufr; for such is the standpoint of some modern schools of philosophy which consider freedom to be the essence of man's human identity. These schools of thought equate man's human identity with his capacity to rebel and disobey every form of servitude and to assert his absolute freedom. Accordingly, every manner of bondage, confinement, and submission is, according to them, inconsistent with man's real identity and leads to self alienation.

They say that man realizes his true humanity only by refusing to submit and surrender. It is characteristic of attachment that the object of love absorbs man's attention and compromises his self-awareness. This results in his forgetting his own self and, subsequently, this aware and free being called man, whose identity is summarized in his awareness and freedom, becomes a slavish creature devoid of freedom and self-awareness. In forgetting his own identity, man also becomes oblivious of his human values. In this state of bondage and servitude he ceases to progress and edify his self and becomes stagnant and frozen at some point. If Islam's philosophy of struggle against worldliness aims at the resurrection of human identity and personality, it should oppose every form of servitude and liberate man from every form of bondage. This, however, is not the case, for Islam, undeniably, advocates liberation from material for the sake of spiritual servitude. Freedom from the world is acquired for the sake of the fetters of the Hereafter and the apple is renounced for the sake of the Lord.

The 'urafa' who advise absolute freedom from attachments, however, do allow an exception. Hafiz says:

I am the slave of the magnanimity of him

Who is free of the taint of attachment to anything under the blue sky

Except the love of the moon-cheeked one,

The joy of whose love redeems all sorrows and woes.

Openly do I declare, and am delighted to proclaim,

I am the slave of Love and free from both the worlds.

Except for the Beloved 's Name inscribed on the slate of my heart,

The teacher did not teach me another word.

From the viewpoint of 'irfan, one must be free of both the worlds but should surrender totally to love. As Hafiz says, the tablet of the heart must be clean of every name except that of the Beloved. The heart should be cleansed of every attachment except the love of 'the moon-cheeked one', that is God, whose love brings redemption from all sorrows and woes.

However, from the viewpoint of the so-called humanistic philosophy freedom of the 'arif, being only relative, does not take us anywhere, because it is freedom from everything for total surrender and servitude to one being, whatever that may be. Servitude is after all servitude and bondage is bondage, regardless of the agent towards which it is directed.

This is the objection raised by the followers of modern humanistic philosophies. In order that the issues involved may be further illuminated, we are compelled to refer to certain philosophical issues.

First of all, one may point out that to assume that there exists a kind of human selfhood and identity and to insist that this identity should be safeguarded, in itself amounts to the negation of movement, progress and development of this selfhood, because, motion and change necessarily result in alienation from this selfhood. This is because movement means becoming: that is, becoming something one is not; it implies continuous transcendence of selfhood and embracing of otherness. Obviously, if we accept this view, it is only by the

means of immobility and stagnation that one can preserve his identity; for development necessitates self-alienation. For this reason, some ancient philosophers defined motion in terms of otherness and self-estrangement. Accordingly, to assume that there exists a certain kind of human 'self' and to insist that this self should be safeguarded and protected from becoming 'non-self', and to speak of movement, progress, and evolution in the same breath, involves an unresolvable contradiction

Some, in order to free themselves from this contradiction, have said that man's identity lies in being devoid of any kind of 'self' whatsoever. Man, they say, is a creature absolutely undefined in his essence and free from any kind of limit, form, or essence. His essence lies in his being without any defined essence. Man is a creature devoid of a fixed nature and essential necessity. Any attempt to define, limit and confine him amounts to depriving him of his real self and identity.

Such a view may be aptly considered poetry and flight of imagination rather than a philosophy. The absolute absence of a fixed form and essence is possible in one of the two cases: Firstly, such a being should possess infinite perfection and pure and unlimited actuality; that is, it should be a being unlimited and unconfined, encompassing all times and places and predominant over all existents, such as the Being of the Creator. For such a being, movement and growth are impossible; because motion and development involve overcoming of defects and imperfections, whereas such a being cannot possibly be supposed to possess any imperfection. Secondly, it may apply to a being devoid of every kind of actuality and merit. That is, it should be pure possibility and sheer potentiality, a neighbour of nothingness, existing only on the remotest frontiers of existence. It should be devoid of any innate reality and essence though capable of assuming any form or essence Such a being, which itself absolutely undefined, is always associated with a definite being; though shapeless and colourless in itself, it exists in the protective shadow of a being possessing form, shape and colour. Such a being is what the philosophers call 'the primal matter'. It occupies the lowest status in the hierarchy of existence and stands on the extremity of being, even as the Divine Essence, being absolute perfection, stands on the other extremity of existence-with the difference that the extremity occupied by the Divine Essence circumscribes all the contents of being. Man, like all other creatures, is situated somewhere between these two extremes and so cannot possibly lack any defined essence. Admittedly, he is different from other creatures, but, unlike them, there is no limit to his movement towards perfection. Whereas other creatures remain confined to certain definite limits which they cannot transcend, there is no end to the possibilities of human development.

Man possesses a special kind of being. But contrary to the view of the philosophers who believe in the precedence of essence and reduce the being of every thing to its quiddity, and who deny the possibility of transcendence and essential change as being self-contradictory, and consider all changes to occur at the level of accidents, the existential nature of man, like that of any other material thing, is fluid, with the difference that its movement and fluidity know no final limits.

Some commentators of the Quran, in their explanations of the verse: "O people of Yathrib, there is no abiding here for you" (33:13), have generalized it to cover all humanity. They hold that man is a creature which does not move to a certain and definite stage or halt; the further he moves the greater are the possibilities open to him. Here we do not wish to indulge in discussing the legitimacy of imposing such interpretations on Quranic verses; we only intend to show that Muslim scholars have thought about man in such terms.

In the hadith about the Prophet's Ascension (al-mi'raj), Gabriel who accompanies the Prophet (S), at a certain point, gives up his journey declaring: "I will get burnt if I move an inch further", while the Prophet (S) leaves him behind and moves further. This is an allusion to the truth mentioned above.

Also, as we know, there is a debate among Muslim scholars about the salawat (Benedictions) upon the Holy Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt, which we make as a prayer to God to shower greater blessings upon them. Now the debate is whether the salawat is of any benefit to the Holy Prophet (S), who is the most perfect man. In other words, is there any possibility of ascension in the Prophet's station? Or does the salawat benefit only the person who pronounces it and beseeches God to bless the Prophet (S), a favour that has already been granted?

The late Sayyid 'Ali Khan opened this debate in his commentary on al-Sahifat al-kamilah. A group of theologians believe that the Holy Prophet (S) is always ascending and climbing higher in his station, and this movement is never halted.

Yes, such is the station of man. That which makes man such is not the absolute absence of a defined essence but a certain kind of essence which is ordinarily referred to as 'human nature' and other similar expressions.

Man does not have any ultimate limits but he has a path. The Quran lays great emphasis on what it calls the Straight Path, which is an unambiguous path before man. Man is not constrained by stages so as to be forced to stop at every stage in his journey. Instead there is an orbit in which he should move. This is the orbit of human perfection which is different from those of the animals. This means the movement in a specified orbit, a movement which is orderly not haphazard.

The Existentialist Viewpoint:

Existentialism has been rightly criticized for its refusal to acknowledge any kind of determination or definition of the human nature, for its considering every determination (even in the form of path or orbit) as contrary to his humanity, and for its emphasis on his absolute freedom and capacity for rebellion; for this philosophy necessarily leads to the breakdown of

social morality and the negation of the individual's commitments and responsibilities.

Does Evolution Involve Self-Alienation?

Now returning to what we said earlier, does movement and evolution necessitate alienation from one's self? Should every being, in order to remain itself, abstain from change and evolution? Does it mean that either man should retain his human identity or, if he chooses an evolutionary course, become something alien to his essence?

The answer is that the true evolution of anything is a movement towards the perfect state which conforms to its nature. In other words, the transformations during movement on the straight path of nature by no means necessitate any loss of specific identity.

That which constitutes the real self of a being is its existence, not its essence. Accordingly, any change in essence does not imply mutation of the 'self' into a 'non-self'. Mulla Sadra, who is the champion of this philosophy, holds that man does not have any definite essence; rather every developing being passing through the stages of its evolution is not a single species but a plurality of species. The relation of an imperfect being with its ultimate stage of perfection is not a relation of otherness; rather it is a relation of the thing to itself. It is the relation of an imperfect self to the perfect self. A thing while evolving toward its perfect state is in movement from its self to its self. In a sense, it can be said to be in movement from the non-self towards its true self. A seed that breaks the ground and sprouts leaves, and sends out branches and flowers, does not move from the self to the non-self. If it were aware of itself and aware of its ultimate evolution, it would not feel self alienated.

That is why the love of true perfection is the love of a higher self, and a praiseworthy love is in itself a desirable and praiseworthy egotism or self-love. Shaykh al-'Ishraq Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi has an elegant ruba'i on this subject:

Beware lest you lose the wisdom 's thread,

And lose your self for the sake of water and bread.

You are the traveller, the way, the destination,

Beware lest you lose the path from the self to the self.

On the basis of what has been said it can be surmised that there is a great difference between desiring God, the movement towards God, the love of God, the attachment and the servitude to God and submission to Him, and the love, the submission, and the servitude to other things. The servitude to God is freedom itself. It is the only relation and tie which does not stagnate the human personality or make it inert and immobile. It is the only kind of worship which does not imply self-forgetfulness and self-alienation. Why? Because He is the Absolute Perfection and the Ultimate Goal and the Destination of all existents: 'And unto thy Lord will be the end of all things' (53:42).

Now we have reached a point from where we can proceed to explain the position of the Quran that forgetting God is forgetting one's own self and the separation from God is absolute annihilation.

Forgetting and Losing the Self:

I remember that about eighteen years ago while discussing the exegesis of certain verses of the Holy Quran in a private gathering, for the first time the point struck me that the Quran very often employs typical expressions about a certain group of human beings, such as those who 'lose', 'forget', or 'sell' their selves. For instance, it says:

They have indeed lost their selves, and that which they were forging has gone astray from them. (7:53) Say: 'Surely the losers are they who lose their selves and their families on the Day of Resurrection' (39:15) Be not as those who forgot God, and so He caused them to forget their selves; those-they are the ungodly. (59:19)

The question might occur to a mind with a philosophic bent. Is it possible for a man to lose his self? The loss of anything necessitates two things: the loser and the thing lost. Now how is it possible for a human being to lose its self? Is it not self-contradictory?

Likewise, is it possible for a man to forget himself? A living human being is always immersed in itself and perceives everything as something other and additional to its own self; its attention is, before everything else, focussed on itself. Then what is meant by forgetting one's self?

Later I realized that this matter occupies a significant place in Islamic teachings, especially in the prayers and some traditions as well as in the writings of Muslim 'urafa'. It shows that often

man mistakes 'non-self' as his self, regards that non-self as his real self. Then imagining the non-self to be his self, he treats the non-self and takes care of it as he would have treated and cared for his true self. The true self, as a result, falls into neglect and oblivion, and occasionally under goes a metamorphosis. For instance, when man imagines his body to represent his total entity, all his endeavour revolves about his body, it means that he has forgotten his self conceiving the non-self to be his real self. Such a man, in the words of Rumi, is like the one who owns a piece of land somewhere; he carries building materials and hires masons and workers to build a house for him; after much toil, the house is made ready for living; the doors and windows are painted, the floor is carpeted, curtains are hung and the house is furnished beautifully in every way; however, one day when he prepares to move into the new house, all of a sudden he realizes his mistake; to his dismay, he notes that instead of erecting the house on his own land, he has constructed it on a land that belongs to somebody else, while his own plot lies abandoned elsewhere:

Don 't build your house on the land of another,

Work for your own self and toil not for the stranger.

Who is the stranger except your own earthen frame?

On whose account are all your sorrows and woes?

So long as you nurse and pamper your body,

The soul would not prosper, nor would it become sturdy.

At another place Rumi says:

You, who have lost your self in a losing encounter,

Distinguishing not the other from your own true self;

At every shadow you are quick to exclaim,

"Ah! This is me!" By God it is not you!

Isolate yourself for a while from the crowd,

And immerse yourself to the neck in thought.

Indeed you shall find that you are one with the One,

Beautiful, serene, and blessed is your self.

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A) has a saying in this regard which is as profound as it is elegant:

I wonder at the man who searches for his lost things but doesn't care to recover his lost self. [8]

Losing oneself and forgetting oneself is not confined to man's error in recognizing his true identity and essence-such as the ordinary man's self-identification with the body, or the 'arif's occasional identification of himself with his barzakhi body. We have said in the last chapter that actually every being in the natural course of its development moves from the self to the self; that is, it moves from a lower, weaker self to a self which is powerful and higher. Accordingly, the deviation of every existent from the path of its perfection and development is deviation from the self towards the non-self. Man, more than any other creature, being endowed with a free will and freedom of choice, is subject to this deviation. By choosing a deviant objective as ultimate for himself, in reality he replaces his true self with the non-self, mistaking the non-self to be the self. It is on this basis that the human being's total immersion in material aspects of life has been regarded as condemnable.

Therefore, the adoption of devious goals and ends is one of the factors of self-alienation that

leads man to forget his true self and finally to lose it.

Devious goals and objectives not only result in the disease of self loss; they lead ultimately to the metamorphosis of man's human essence, a metamorphosis that is determined by that particular devious goal. A significant part of Islamic teachings is devoted to drive home the point that on the Day of Resurrection every human being shall be raised with the object of his love. Our traditions declare unequivocally:

Everyone, on the Day of Judgement shall be raised in the company of his object of love, whatever that should be, even if it is a stone. [9]

With attention to the indubitable and unequivocal Islamic teaching that on the Day of Judgement man would be raised in the form of what he acquired in this world, it becomes clear that the reason for a person's resurrection together with the objects of his love is that the love and attachment for that object make it the ultimate goal of the path of his becoming. However devious that objective may be, it causes the soul and the inner reality of a person to transform into that object.

This subject has been given great attention by Muslim sages and philosophers, who have made great many interesting observations in this regard. For brevity's sake, we shall quote only one ruba'i on this topic: The seeker of a mine of diamonds is himself a mine; The seeker of the spirit is himself the spirit; I will divulge the secret of this matter: You are whatever you seek, you are the object of your quest.

The Discovery of the Self and of God:

The rediscovery of the self, in addition to the above two, requires to fulfil one more condition, and that is the realization and knowledge of the Cause of one's creation and existence. That is, it is impossible for man to recognize himself and know himself by viewing himself in separation from the Cause of his creation. The real Cause of every existent is prior to it and nearer to it than it is to itself:

And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (50:16) And know that God stands between a man and his heart. (8:24)

The Muslim mystics have laid great emphasis on the point that the knowledge of the self (ma'rifat al-nafs) and the knowledge of God (ma'rifat Allah) are not separate from one another. To experience the spirit, which according to the Quran is God's 'breath', is, to experience the Divine Essence. The Muslim mystics have raised severe objections against the statements of Muslim philosophers regarding the problem of self-knowledge and consider them to be inadequate.

Shaykh Mahmud al-Shabistari was sent a series of versified questions by someone from Khurasan. His poem Gulshan-e raz is the reply he gave to the questions. In one of the questions, the enquirer asks:

Who am I?

Inform me about my self.

What is meant by "Journey within thy self"?

The Shaykh's reply is elaborate. There he says:

Forms and spirits, from the same light are derived,

Reflected of mirror or beaming from the lamp.

I' the word is everywhere in all your speech.

It refers to the soul, the spirit. 'I' and 'You ',

are greater than the body and the spirit,

Which are together parts of the self.

Go then, my good man, first know well your self,

And remember: edema is different from robustness. [10]

Leave one of them to soar over the undulations of space and time,

Abandon the world to become a world in yourself.

A further elaboration of this theme will take us outside the scope of our present discussion. To be brief, it should be said that the gnosis of the self is inseparable from that of God. This is exactly the meaning of the famous saying of the Prophet (S), and the same theme recurs in the recorded statements of Imam 'Ali (A):

He who knows his self knows his Lord.

In the Nahj al-balaghah it is reported that Imam 'Ali (A) was asked by somebody: 'Have you seen your God?' Ali (A) replied: 'Would I worship what I have not seen?' Then he elaborated his answer thus:

He is not visible to the eyes but the hearts perceive Him through (the factual experience of) faith (iman). [11]

An interesting point that is implicit in the statements of the Quran is that man is in possession of himself as long as he 'possesses' God. Only through the remembrance of God does he remember his self and become fully aware of it, and to forget God is to neglect one's own self. Forgetting God is accompanied by self-forgetfulness:

Be not as those who forgot God, and so He caused them to forget their selves. (59:19)

Rumi, following his verses quoted above, says:

Even if the body should lie amidst fragrance and musk,

On death it will petrify and give out its stink.

So scent not the body, but perfume the soul with musk,

What is that musk except the Name of the Glorious Lord ?

Hafiz says:

Hafiz, if you desire presence,

do not be absent from Him.

If you desire His rendezuous,

abandon the world and forget it.

This shows why the remembrance of God is essential for the life of the heart; it awakens and illumines the heart and gives peace to the soul; it revives, purifies, refines, and humbles the human conscience and fills it with delight. How profound and beautiful are 'Ali's words in the Nahj al-balaghah where he says:

Certainly God Almighty has made His remembrance a means for cleaning and polishing the hearts. It makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness, and makes them submissive to guidance after being stubborn and resisting. In all periods and times when there were no prophets, there were individuals to whom He whispered through their thoughts and spoke to them through their intellects. As a result they were enlightened with a light awakening their

hearts, their vision and their hearing. [12]

Worship and the Rediscovery of the Self:

There is so much that can be said about worship that if we were to be elaborate we would have to devote scores of chapters to this subject. Here we shall make a brief reference to the value of worship in the rediscovery of the self.

As much as the bondage to material matters and immersion in them severs man from his true self and induces self-alienation, worship helps him in recovering his own self. Worship awakens and arouses man from his spiritual slumber. It rescues him from drowning in the sea of self-neglect and forgetfulness and saves his identity from being lapsed in the world of material things. It is in the mirror of worship and God's remembrance that man can observe himself as he really is and become aware of his failings and faults. It is in worship that he acquires the true perspective of being, life, space and time, like watching a city from a high mountain, and perceives the insignificance, pettiness and abjectness of his materialistic hopes, desires, and ambitions. It is in worship that a yearning is awakened in his heart to attain to the very core of being.

I have always marvelled at the following words of the famous scientist of our age, Albert Einstein. What adds to my amazement is that he was a physicist and a mathematician, not a psychologist, theologian or philosopher. After dividing religion into three stages, he calls the third stage of religious experience as the one arising from 'cosmic religious feeling.' He describes this religious experience in these words:

The individual feels the futility of human desires and aims, and the sublimity and marvellous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole.[13]

William James, writing about prayer, says:

The impulse to pray is a necessary consequence of the fact that whilst the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a self of the social sort it yet can find its only adequate socius (its "great companion") in an ideal world. Most men, either continually or occasionally, carry a reference to it in their breasts. The humblest outcast on this earth can feel himself to be real and valid by means of this higher recognition. [14]

Iqbal also has something profound to say about worship and prayer and their value for the rediscovery of the self. He writes:

Prayer as a means of spiritual illumination is a normal vital act by which the island of our personality suddenly discovers its situation in a larger whole of life. [15]

We conclude our discussion of this extensive subject right here.

Some Relevant Issues:

Now that our discussion about the concept of the world in the Nahj al-balaghah is nearing its conclusion, I want to clarify some issues with attention to the principles discussed above.

The World Versus the Hereafter:

1. Some Islamic traditions seem to imply that there exists a kind of conflict between the world and the Hereafter. For instance, it is stated that they are like 'two rival wives' who can never be reconciled, or it is said that they are like the East and the West: one cannot approach any one of them without moving farther from the other. How should one interpret these statements in order to reconcile them with what has been said above?

The answer is that, firstly, as has been expressly stated in most Islamic traditions, a reconciliation between winning the world and the Hereafter is not only possible but is a necessity of the Islamic creed. That which is impossible is their reconciliation as ultimate ends and goals.

The enjoyment of the good things of the world does not necessarily require deprivation from the blessings of the next world. That which deprives one of the rewards of the next life is a series of mortal sins, not the enjoyment of a wholesome, comfortable life and the availing of pure and lawful bounties provided by God. Similarly, that which leads to deprivation in the world is not taqwa or righteous deeds or the endeavour for the Hereafter; a number of other factors are responsible for it.

Many prophets, Imams, and pious believers, whose virtuousness and piety are indubitable, have been among those who benefited greatly from the legitimate bounties of the world. Accordingly, even if it be assumed that the religious texts do imply irreconcilability between the enjoyment of the world and that of the Hereafter, they would not be acceptable because of the incontrovertible evidence to the contrary.

Secondly, if we scrutinize such traditions closely, an interesting point comes to the surface in whose light we observe no contradiction between them and the incontrovertible principles of Islam. But before that this point may be explained, we should examine three possible relationships between the world and the Hereafter:

1. The relation between enjoyment of the good things of the world and enjoyment of the rewards of the Hereafter.

2. The relation between the world as the ultimate goal and the Hereafter as such.

3. The relation between adoption of one of these as the ultimate goal with the enjoyment of the other.

There is no conflict whatsoever involved in the first case. Accordingly a reconciliation between the two is quite possible. The second case, however, involves a contradiction; for there is no possibility of reconciling these two opposite goals.

As to the third, it involves in turn two cases: first, the adoption of the world as the ultimate end and the enjoyment of the Hereafter; second, the adoption of the Hereafter as the ultimate goal and the enjoyment of the world. The first case involves a contradiction, whereas the second doesn't.

The Primary and the Secondary:

The conflict between the adoption of either the world or the Hereafter as ultimate ends and the enjoyment of the other is the kind that exists between a perfect and an imperfect end. If the imperfect is made the ultimate goal, the perfect is necessarily missed; whereas if the perfect were one's end and goal, it would not necessarily preclude the imperfect. The same is true of anything primary in relation to its secondaries. If something secondary were made the aim, it would result in deprivation from the primary. But if the primary is made the aim and goal, the secondary, being a corollary of the primary, is automatically included. This is most eloquently explained in Hikmah 269 of the Nahj al-balaghah:

There are two types of workers among the people of the world: (One type is represented by) the man who works in this world for this world and his involvement in the world makes him forget the Hereafter. He is worried about those whom he shall leave behind (on death) lest poverty should strike them as if he were himself secure of it (in the Hereafter). So he spends his life for the (worldly) benefit of others. The other type of man works in the world for the sake of the Hereafter and secures his share of the world effortlessly. Thus he derives benefit from the both and comes to possess both the worlds. As a result he acquires honour before God, Who grants him whatever he asks of Him.

Rumi offers an interesting allegory. He compares the Hereafter and the world to a train of camels and the trail of dung that it leaves behind. If one's aim were to own the train of camels he would also have the camels' dung and wool. But if one wants only the dung and the wool, he will never come to acquire the train of camels and will always be collecting dung and wool

of camels which belong to others.

Hanker you after faith for its pursuit yields

Beauty, wealth, honour, and good fortune.

Consider the Hereafter as a camel train;

The world is a trail of wool and dung in its rear.

If you want only the wool, you will never the camels own;

Yet if you own a camel train, isn 't its wool your own ?

That the relation of the world to the Hereafter is like that of a secondary thing to its primary; that worldliness, being a pursuit of the secondary, leads to deprivation from the benefits of the Hereafter; and that other worldliness by itself ensures the benefits of the world, is a teaching that originates in the Quran. Verses 145-148 of the Surat Al 'Imran expressly, and verses 18 and 19 of the Surat al-'Isra' together with verse 20 of the Surat al-Shura implicitly present this view.

A Tradition:

1. There is a well-known tradition found in the texts of hadith as well as other books and is also mentioned in the last will of al-'Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (A). This is the text of the tradition:

In regard to the world be as if you were going to live for ever. With respect to the Hereafter be as if you were going to die tomorrow. [16]

This tradition has been highly controversial in that it has led to contradictory interpretations.

Some interpret it as implying that one should deal with worldly matters with relaxed inattention and without hurry. Whenever one is faced with an affair of worldly life, one should say to himself "There is still a lot of time, why hurry?" But when performing good deeds for the Hereafter, one should imagine as if he were not going to be alive after tomorrow and say to himself: "There isn't much time left; it is already too late."

Others with the conviction that Islam would never recommend negligence and carelessness, which certainly has not been the practice of the leaders of the faith, have said that what is implied is that one should always approach the worldly affairs as if he were immortal, attend to them with attention and care, and not perform them in a perfunctory manner with the pretext that life is fleeting. Rather, they say, the works of the world should be done with firmness and great foresight and attention, as if one were going to live till the end of the world. The rationale for this is that if one were to die, others will derive benefit from one's works. The affairs of the Hereafter, however, are in God's hand; so think of them as if you were going to die tomorrow and there is not much time left for anything .

As can be noticed, the first one of these two interpretations recommends negligence and lack of commitment towards the affairs of the world, whereas the second one advises a similar attitude towards the Hereafter. Obviously, none of these two interpretations can be regarded as acceptable.

In our opinion, this, one of the most subtle of traditions, consists of an invitation to action, care, and attention and avoidance of negligence and indifference, whether with respect to the worldly activities or those which relate to the Hereafter.

Suppose a person living in a house knows that sooner or later he will have to move to another house where he will stay permanently. However, he does not know the day, the month or the year when he shall have to make the shift. Such a man is in a state of dilemma with regard to matters relating to his present home and his plans about his future house. If he knows that he will move tomorrow, he would not pay any attention to the repairs and upkeep of his present house, and attend only to matters concerning the planned Shift. But if he knows that he would not be shifting his residence for several years, he will act in an opposite manner; presently he will devote all his attention to the present house, knowing that there is much time left to deal with those relating to his future residence.

Now this person, in a state of doubt about the exact date of the shift, not knowing whether he will have to shift in near future or remain in his present house for years, meets a friend who wisely advises him to attend to the affairs of his present house as if he were to continue living there for a long time and not to neglect its upkeep. As to the other house, the wise friend advises him to get it ready as if he were going to move tomorrow and have it furnished as soon as possible. This advice will have the consequence that it will make him adopt a serious and active attitude towards both his houses.

Suppose someone wants to start a work, like writing a book or founding an institution or taking up a project which requires years of pursuit. If such a person thinks that he will not live long enough to finish his work, he might desist from starting it. That is why it is said that one must think that he will live for long. But the same person, from the point of view of repenting for his sins and compensating for the past excesses with regard to religious duties or the rights of the people he has transgressed-all of which require little time for their accomplishment given the will to do so-may keep on postponing them every day so that the promised tomorrow may never come.In such cases, contrary to the first kind of attitude, to assume that one has still enough time and there is no reason to hasten, would result in negligence and delay in fulfilment of one's duties. Therefore, here one should assume that there isn't much time left.

Therefore, we see that in one case to assume that one has enough time encourages action and endeavour and the assumption that there is no time left would lead one to abstain from action and endeavour. In the other case, the result is quite the opposite. Here, the assumption that one has still a lot of time leads to negligence and procastination, and the assumption that there isn't much time left leads to quick accomplishment of duties.

In the light of this, the hadith means to say that in regard to one kind of duties one should assume that he is going to live on and with respect to another kind suppose that not much remains of his life.

This interpretation is not baseless. There are several traditions which confirm the above interpretation. The reason that this tradition gave rise to controversy is that attention was not paid to such traditions.

Safinat al-bihar, under rifq, relates a tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) addressed to Jabir:

Indeed this (i.e. Islam) is a firm religion. So (do not make it hard on yourself but) act in it with mildness ... Cultivate like him who thinks he will never die and work (for the hereafter) like him who is afraid he will die tomorrow.

In volume XV of Bihar al-'anwar (the section on akhlaq, Bab 29), it is related from al-Kafi that the Holy Prophet (S) addressed 'Ali (A), saying:

This (Islam) is a firm religion ... So work like him who hopes to live for long and be cautious like him who is afraid that he would die tomorrow. That is, when commencing a useful project that requires a long time for its completion, assume that you will live long enough to complete it. However, in regard to matters which you might postpone thinking that you have enough time to handle them, assume that you shall die tomorrow, so that time is not wasted and delay is avoided.

In Nahj al-balaghah, it is related from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said:

Attend to the affairs of the world; but with respect to the Hereafter be such as if you were going to die tomorrow.

In the same book, the Prophet (S) is related as saying:

Work like the man who imagines that he will never die; and be cautious like him who knows he is going to die tomorrow.

In another tradition the Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

The mu'min is the most vexed of men, for he must attend to the affairs of the world as well as those of the Hereafter.

In Safinat al-bihar, under nafs, a hadith of al-'Imam Musa al-Kazim (A) is related from Tuhaf al-'uqul to the effect that:

He who abandons the world for his Hereafter or abandons his Hereafter for his world is not from us.

The above discussion on the whole confirms our interpretation of the hadith and also shows that this approach finds recurring echo in the teachings of the leaders of the Islamic faith.

Concluded; wal-hamdu lilla-h

Notes:

[1] This is a tradition of the Prophet (S).

[2] This is in reference to a sentence from Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 28

[3] This is in reference to a sentence from Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. 131

[4] This is in reference to a sentence from Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. 131

[5] Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. 131

[6] Ibid., Khutab, No. 223

[7] Ibid, Khutab, No. 203

[8] al Amudi, al Shurar wa al durar, vol. 4 p. 340

[9] Safinat ul Bihar, under hubb

[10] This reference to the famous words of Ibn al Arabi about one who imagines to have known the mysteries of the self through the statement of the philosophers.

[11] Nahj al-balaghah, Khutab, No. 179

[12] Ibid, Khutab, No. 222

[13] A. Einstein, Ideas and Opinions (London 1973) based on Mein Weltbild; ed by Carl Seeling, p. 38

[14] Muhammad Iqbal, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Lahore 1971, p. 89

[15] Ibid., p. 90

[16] Wasail al Shiah, vol. 2 p. 535 (Bab No. 82, hadith No. 2)

Al-Tawhid

Outlines of the Development of the Science of Hadith

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Part I

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The word hadith, according to the dictionary, has several meanings such as "new," "novel," "recent," "modern," and "speech", "report," "account," and "narrative." However, in Islamic context, the term hadith means "Prophetic tradition" or "narrative relating deeds and utterances of the Prophet (S)." According to some, even the account of a dream linked with the Holy Prophet (S) is also included in the category of hadith.

In most cases, the words sunnah and hadith are used as interchangeable synonyms by the scholars of the science of hadith. The author of the book Talwih says: "Sunnah is a more general term than hadith, and includes everything related to the Prophet (S) except the Qur'an: his speech - which is hadith - and his behaviour and character."[1] According to another opinion, since the majority of Sunni Muslims believe in Qur'an's being sempiternal (qadim), everything else except the Qur'an from the Prophet (S) came to be called hadith, a word closely related with hadith meaning "incidental" as opposed to "eternal".[2] Some are of the opinion that the sayings of the Sahabah (the Companions of the Prophet) and the Tabi`un (the second generation after the Holy Prophet (S)) can also be included under the term hadith.[3] On the other hand, for the Shi`ah authorities on hadith, the term can properly include only the narratives relating the speech, biographical details and deeds of the Prophet (S) and the Imams (A).[4]

Here, we consider it necessary first to explain certain terms related to our discussion.

Sunnah:

The term in general means "habitual practice" or "customary procedure," and in particular applies to the sayings and doings of the religious leaders who are ma`sum[5] (i.e. the Prophet and the Imams, who are considered as being free of sin and error). Accordingly, the term is employed by the side of the Book (Qur'an). Sunnah is used in a sense that is wider than that of hadith, although in some of the Sunni texts of tradition, such as of Ibn Maja, al-Bayhaqi and others, the term signifies hadith. The authorities of hadith differ as to meanings covered by hadith and khabar (report). While some consider the terms as being synonymous, others are of the opinion that khabar is a term which is more general than hadith. According to them,

khabar applies to every narrative regarding the Prophet (S), while hadith is taken to mean a narration quoting the Prophet (S) himself.[6] Some, as pointed out above, apply the term hadith to the sayings of the Sahabah and Tabi`un in addition. Accordingly, every hadith is also a khabar, though every khabar is not a hadith; though some regard the terms as being inter-changeable synonyms.[7]

Riwayah:

This term is synonymous with hadith. According to the author of Majma` al-bahrayn, "Riwayah is a khabar that is traceable through a series of narrators to a ma`sum."[8]

Athar:

Shaykh Baha'i in his Nihayat al-dirayah considers athar as being identical with hadith. Others impute to it a wider meaning. Still others confine its meaning to narrations that go back to the Sahabah.[9]

Hadith-i Qudsi:

Hadith-i qudsi is defined as the Divine communication whose revelation is not the part of the Qur'anic miracle. Sayyid Sharif Jurjani says: " [Hadith-i qudsi] is from God, the Most Exalted, from the point of view of meaning, and from the Prophet (S) from the viewpoint of actual wording. It constitutes what God has communicated to the Prophet through revelation or in dreams. The Prophet - upon whom be peace - informed others of its meaning in his own words. Accordingly, the Qur'an is superior to the hadith-i qudsi, because it is the actual Word of God."

There are six points of differences between the Qur'an and the hadith-i qudsi: Firstly, the Qur'an is a Divine miracle; this does not necessarily apply to the hadith-i qudsi. Secondly, salat (prayer) is not valid without recitation of parts of the Qur'an; this is not so in the case of the hadith-i qudsi. Thirdly, one who rejects the Qur'an is regarded as a kafir (an unbeliever); this does not hold true in the case of the hadith-i qudsi. Fourthly, whole of the Qur'an was communicated to the Prophet (S) through the agency of the Angel Gabriel; this does not apply to hadith-i qudsi. Fifthly, every word of the Qur'an is the Word of God, but the wordings of the hadith-i qudsi may be ascribed to the Prophet (S). Sixthly, the Qur'an cannot be touched without taharah (the condition of bodily purity as prescribed by the Shari'ah) and this condition does not apply to the hadith-i qudsi.[10]

Origins of the Science of Hadith

The Holy Prophet of Islam (S), for a period of 23 years from the beginning of his prophetic mission to the moment of his death, was directly involved in the process of guidance and leadership of the people. The multifarious kinds of questions that arose for the Muslims in relation with their needs converged upon the Holy Prophet. The Prophet responded to their questions through explanations and discussions whose variety increased with the progress of Islam to the extent of enveloping all aspects of the moral, social and civic affairs of Muslims. The new society that emerged during this period was significant and important from every aspect. The Muslims who were the contemporaries of the Prophet had the advantage of personal recourse to him and chance of putting to him various questions regarding their social life. However, as long as the Prophet lived, and the source of Divine Revelation was in the midst of the Muslims, the great importance of recording his words was not fully realized. Nevertheless, soon after the Prophet's death, the Muslims realized the imminent need of recording the hadith so as to avoid the problems that would arise in the future generations. Accordingly, from the time of the first caliph, the need for recording of hadith was distinctly felt by the Muslim society. It should not remain unsaid that `Ali (A), the first Imam of the Shi`ah Muslims, had with characteristic foresight, pioneered the task of recording the Prophet's sayings during the Prophet's lifetime itself. Word for word, he wrote down what he had heard from the Prophet (S). The author of Ta'sis al-shi`ah writes:

> ...Know that the Shi`ah were the first to embark on collecting the records of the acts and sayings of the Prophet (S) during the era of the caliphs. They followed in the footsteps of their Imam `Ali, Amir al-Mu'minin (A), for, he had recorded and categorized the hadith during the times of the Holy Prophet. Al-Shaykh Abu al-Abbas al-Najashi, in the translation of Muhammad Ibn `Adhafar, said: "I was with Hakam ibn `Ayyinah by the side of Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Baqir (A). Hakam started asking questions with Abu Ja`far reluctantly answering them. There was a disagreement between them about one thing. Then Abu Ja`far said: "Son, get up and bring `Ali's book." He brought a big voluminous book and opened it. He looked closely in it for a while until he found the problem (which was under debate). Abu Ja`far (A) said: "This is the handwriting of `Ali and the dictation of the Messenger of Allah, upon whom be God's peace and benedictions."[11]

This tradition is in agreement with what I found in Najashi's Rijal. In addition, two other sources confirm the contents of the abovementioned hadith.[12]

Another narration that confirms the attention devoted by the Shi`ah to recording of hadith is that of an incident from the life of Fatimah al-Zahra'(A). One day Fatimah (A) could not find a manuscript in which hadith was recorded. She reportedly urged her housemaid to search for it, saying, "Look for it. It is as precious to me as my sons Hasan and Husayn."[13]

Among the Ahl al-Sunnah, the recording of hadith started after the Holy Prophet's death, and

that too after prolonged controversies between groups who favoured and opposed it.[14] In this connection, `A'ishah reports: "My father Abu Bakr had collected five-hundred hadith of the Messenger of Allah and one day he burnt them all."[15]

There are several narrations regarding the second caliph which indicate that he stopped people from relating the Holy Prophet's traditions.[16]

The recording of hadith among the Sunnis started from the early second century when the Umayyad caliph `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ordered their collection and compilation.[17] As is widely accepted, Ibn Jurayj was the first person to record and compile hadith among the Sunnis.[18]

Here it is worth mentioning that apart from the Household of the Prophet (S), their Shi`ah followers preceded the Sunnis in their effort to record the hadith. Abu Rafi` was the first man to begin the task along with the members of the Prophet's Household (A).[19] However, there were also several others who took up this task at the time of Abu Rafi`, or after him. Among them were: `Ubayd Allah ibn Abi Rafi`, `Ali ibn Abi Rafi`, Salman al-Farisi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Asbagh ibn Nubatah and others.[20]

The Shi`ah recorders of hadith can be divided into four groups:

1. In the first group, besides `Ali ibn Abi-Talib (A) and Fatimah al-Zahra' (A), were Abu Rafi`, Salman al-Farisi, Maytham al-Tammar, Asbagh ibn Nubatah, Mujashi`i al-Kufi, `Ubayd Allah ibn Abi Rafi`, Harth ibn `Abd Allah al-A`war al-Hamdani, Rabi`ah ibn Sami`, Salim ibn Qays, `Ali ibn Abi Rafi`, `Abd Allah ibn Hurr, Muhammad ibn Qays al-Bajali, Ya`la ibn Murrah, Jabir ibn `Abd Allah al-Ansari.

2. In the second group were Imam `Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-`Abidin (A), Ja`far ibn Yazid al-Ju`fi, Zayd ibn `Ali, Husayn ibn Thawr, Ziyad ibn al-Mundhir.

3. In the third group can be said to belong Yahya ibn Qasim, `Abd al-Mu'min, Zurarah ibn A`yun, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Bassim al-Sayrafi, Abu `Ubaydah al-Hadhdha', Zakariyya ibn `Abd Allah, Thawrab ibn Qamamah, Majd ibn Mughirah, Muhammad ibn Za'idah al-Khadrami, Mu`awiyah ibn `Amarah, Matlab al-Zahri, `Abd Allah ibn Maymun.

4. This group of recorders of the hadith comprised of more than four-thousand of the people of Iraq, Hijaz, Khurasan and Sham (Syria), who related traditions from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (A) or Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq (A).[21]

The pioneers in recording of the hadith among the Sunnis were Ibn Jurayj in Mecca; Ibn Ishaq

and Malik in Medina; Rabi` ibn Sabih, Sa`id ibn Abi `Urubah, Hammad ibn Salamah in Basra; Sufyan ibn Thawri in Kufa; al-Awza`i in Syria, Haytham in Wasit; Mu`ammar in Yemen, Jarir ibn `Abd al-Hamid in Rey, and Ibn Mubarak in Harran.[22] However, there is a disagreement among the Sunni scholars about who first started recording hadith. According to Ibn Hajr, Rabi` ibn Sabih (died 160/777) and Sa`id ibn Abi `Urubah (died 156/773) were pioneers in this field; they were followed by Malik in Medina and `Abd al-Malik ibn Jurayj in Mecca, who pursued the task of recording hadith.[23] But according to Haji Khalifah, `Abd al-Malik ibn Jurayj and Malik ibn Anas were the first ones to do so, and the first man to classify them and divide them into chapters was Rabi` ibn Sabih.[24] In any case, regardless of who it was to first record hadith among the Ahl al-Sunnah, whether Rabi` ibn Sabih or Malik or Sa`id ibn Abi `Urubah, all of them belong to the second century of Hijra, and lived one hundred years after the Shi`ah had already started this work.

As we mentioned above, the Muslims recognized the need to record the words of the Prophet (S) right after his demise; because they knew that it was the only way to safeguard the future generations against various problems. The realization of the significance of this work grew gradually. After the Prophet (S) his close companions formed the primary source of hadith. During their lifetimes, the solution of various problems that arose could still be found and the narrations of the Sahabah served as the guiding torch for the generation that followed them, the Tabi`un. It was during the generation of the Tabi`un that the Sahabah were questioned about various issues and their narrations were committed to writing. This was the beginning of the science of hadith. Hadith served as the key to the understanding of the Qur'an, and became an addendum to the Book for the Muslims. However, as pointed out earlier, the Shi`ah had felt this need earlier during the lifetime of the Prophet himself.

From the time that Muslims began to realize the need for collection and recording of ahadith, they took great pains in this regard. A man like Jabir ibn `Abd Allah al-Ansari would cover months on camel-back to hear a hadith.[25]

The number of the Companions of the Prophet from whom traditions have been related is put somewhere near 114 in some books.[26] The most important of them were: `Ali ibn Abi-Talib (A), `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud, Salman al-Farisi, Ubayy ibn Ka`ab, `Ammar ibn Yasir, Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf, Anas ibn Malik, Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, `A'ishah, `Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abu Hurayrah, `Abd Allah ibn al-`Abbas, `Ubadah ibn Samit, Jabir ibn `Abd Allah al-Ansari, Abu Sa`id al-Khudri.

Among the Tabi`un, there were such as Sha`bi, Ibn Musayyab, Ibn Sirin, and others.[27]

The author of Tadrib al-rawi puts the number of traditions narrated from each of the Companions in the diminishing order as follows:

1. Abu Hurayrah: 5,374 hadith.

2. `Abd Allah ibn `Umar: 2,630 hadith.
3. `A'ishah: 2,208 hadith.
4. `Abd Allah ibn al-`Abbas: 1,660 hadith.
5. Jabir ibn `Abd Allah al-Ansari: 1,540 hadith.
6. Abu Sa`id al-Khudri: 1,170 hadith.[28]

There is none among the rest of companions to be accredited with narration of more than one thousand traditions. Evidently, the political conditions prevalent during the Umayyad rule did not permit narration of ahadith from `Ali (A) and his followers. It is worth mentioning that not all of the first narrators of hadith were equally reliable. This issue will be discussed later in the chapter on dirayat al-hadith (critical examination of hadith). But before we enter the discussion on dirayat al-hadith, its origin and development, it is necessary to study the course of development of the science of hadith among the Shi`ah and the Ahl al-Sunnah from the point of view of style of compilation of the texts during various periods.

Hadith Among the Shi`ah: The Four-hundred Usul

As said above, the work of compilation of hadith among the Shi`ah started during the life of the Prophet (S). The texts which were compiled by the early Shi`ah scholars were called "Usul." It should however be admitted that these texts were not without defect from the point of view of the art of writing and compilation; for, most of the authors of these texts were those who had heard the ahadith from one of the Imams, in particular, from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq (A), writing them down in notebooks. These notebooks composed by the Shi`ah scholars, containing the traditions heard from one of the Imams, or heard from someone who had heard the Imam, came to be called "Usul." Out of these texts compiled from the era of `Ali (A) to the time of Imam Hasan al-`Askari, the eleventh Imam, the popular ones were four-hundred in number by different authors. Each of them contained a number of ahadith written without any attention being paid to the sequence or classification according to the subject. Most of these traditions exist in the al-Mahasin al-Barqi, al-Kafi, Man la Yahduruhu al-faqih. Some of them are found in Tahdhib. It appears that most of these notebooks existed in the Shahpur Karkh Library of Baghdad and were lost when Tughrul the Turk burnt the city on conquering it in the year 448/1056. Others which escaped this calamity, and other disasters, were preserved until the time of Ibn Idris and Ibn Ta'wus and were available to them. Some, more than two-hundred of them, have survived to our own times.[29] These notebooks usually go with the prefix "kitab" and often "nawadir". Thirteen of them exist in the library of the Tehran University in the manuscript file number 962. Twelve of them are "kitab" and one is "nawadir". These are:

1. Kitab Zayd al-Zad;
2. Kitab Ghasfari;
3. Kitab ibn Hamid al-Hannat;
4. Kitab Zayd al-Nirsi;
5. Kitab Ja`far al-Hadrami;
6. Kitab Muhammad al-Hadrami;
7. Kitab `Abd al-Malik ibn Hakim;
8. Kitab Muthanna ibn Walid al-Hannat;
9. Kitab Haddad al-Sindi;
10. Kitab Husayn ibn `Uthman;
11. Kitab Kahili;
12. Kitab Salam Khurasani;
13. Nawadir Abi al-Hasan `Ali ibn Asbat ibn Salim.[30]

The Four Books:

The later Shi`ah scholars of hadith compiled four great collections from the aforementioned notebooks or Usul which became the most important texts of hadith in the Shi`ah world receiving hitherto unprecedented popularity. These four books were the following:

1. **Al-Kafi:** It was compiled by Shaykh Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Ya`qub al-Kulayni al-Razi (died 329/940) which contains 16,099 musnad (documented) hadith narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (the Household of the Prophet).[31]

2. **Man la yahduruhu al-faqih:** It was compiled by Shaykh Saduq Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Babwayhi al-Qummi (died 381/991) who is known as "Shaykh-i Ajal" or "Saduq al-Ta'ifah". This book contains 9,044 hadith.[32]

3. **Al-Tahdhib:** It was compiled by Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (died 460/1068) also known as "Shaykh al-Ta'ifah" (The chief of the sect). This book contains 13,590 hadith.[33]

4. **Al-Istibsar:** This book was also compiled by Shaykh Tusi, and contains 5,511 hadith. The book is divided into four parts.[34]

It is necessary to mention here that the four hundred "Usul" were widely quoted and narrated by the Shi`ah muhaddithin (scholars of hadith) until a comprehensive compilation called al-Mahasin was done by Shaykh Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi, who died in the second half of the third century of Hijra. His book contained a large number of ahadith arranged in numerous chapters. The al-Mahasin set an example which opened a new era in the history of the science of Shi`ah hadith;[35] because it was after him that others took up the task of collection, compilation and classification of ahadith, which were until then scattered in hundreds of Usul. This trend led to the emergence of the four authoritative compilations of hadith during the fourth and fifth centuries. Since then, they have been considered the greatest sources of hadith for the Shi`ah and served as the primary sources for the later day writers.

The Age of Exposition:

After the compilation of the four great texts of hadith, the next stage was that of exposition. During this period, the attention of most of the scholars was devoted to writing of commentaries and exposition of these texts. A large number of commentaries were written on each of these texts. In spite of the fact that most of these commentaries have, in the course of time, been forgotten and lie buried in libraries, more than 120 of these commentaries and exegeses have come down to our times.[36]

However, this phase of exposition should be regarded as a period of langour in the history of development of the science of hadith; because, instead of a gradual growth, it marked a stage when most of the discussions went round and round in a definite circle without any progress or breakthrough. This situation lasted until the time of Safavid rule. With the formal recognition of the Shi`ah faith as the state religion from the early times of the Safavis, the study of hadith commenced growth once again.

The Age of Great Scholars and Great Books:

Great scholars of hadith appeared in the Shi`ah world during the period of Safavid rule. These men restored the leading role of the Shi`ah in this field, with the result that after ages of neglect and stagnation, the study of hadith entered its golden age. At the close of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelveth, for once again, the study of hadith received the attention of great scholars. The most prominent among them were Muhammad ibn Murtada

Mulla Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani (died 1091/1680), Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Hurr al-`Amili (died 1104/1692-93) and Mulla Muhammad Baqir ibn Muhammad Taqi al-Majlisi (died 1111/1699-1700). Each of them has left behind a precious scholarly work. These works are the following:

1. **Kitab al-jami` al-Wafi:** It is the work of Mulla Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani. This book comprises of the four aforementioned classical texts of hadith. In this book, which is a very precious work from every aspect, the repetitive ahadith have been deleted and expositions have been written on the difficult ones.[37]

2. **Wasa'il al-Shi`ah:** Its author is Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr al-`Amili. This book, like the above one, combines the four classical texts of hadith and draws upon other sources also.

3. **Bihar al-Anwar:** It is what can be called an encyclopedia of Shi`ah hadith. It is the work of `Allamah Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi and is the greatest work of hadith compiled either among the Sunnis or the Shi`ah. In this work, in addition to the Shi`ah sources, there are plenty of ahadith drawn from the Sunni sources. In spite of the great amount of labour and pain borne by al-`Allamah al-Majlisi, it should be admitted that the book is an unfinished masterpiece; since, he could not succeed in eliminating many weak traditions from his great work. Had al-Majlisi lived for another decade, he might have been successful in producing a true "ocean of light" full of precious pearls and corals and mines of pure gold. The task of extracting its precious pearls and gold from this unfathomable ocean and clearing its treasures of their adhering mud and fungus remains for us to accomplish.

The Age of Further Research:

After the age of al-Majlisi, another age followed in which the study of hadith made valuable progress. The scholars of this period did not abandon the pursuits of such men as Fayd al-Kashani, al-Hurr al-`Amili, and al-`Allamah al-Majlisi; rather they adhered to this path with greater care and attention to the new sophisticated criteria of authorship. Among those who have left worthy books in the field of the science of hadith can be named `Allamah Muhammad Husayn ibn `Allamah al-Taqi, and Muhammad Nuri al-Mazandarani al-Tabarsi, the latter of whom wrote the Kitab mustadrak al-wasa'il wa mustanbat al-masa'il, which was finished in 1319/1901, adding several chapters to the Kitab al-wasa'il al-shi`ah. This book is the greatest compilation of the ahadith of the Shi`ah faith. `Allamah Nuri died in the year 1320/1902 in the city of Najaf.[38] In this brilliant period there lived such great men as the late Ayatullah Haj Aqa Husayn Burujardi, whose work changed the status of several thousand hadith. It is hoped that the Shi`ite and Sunni scholars of our times, working together, may be able to make greater achievements in this field.

Hadith Among the Ahl Al-Sunnah - The First Recorders:

According to Kashf al-Zunun, when the Companions of the Prophet (S) began to die one after another, the need to record the hadith became evident. It is also maintained that the first person to compose a book in Islam was Ibn Jurayj.[39] The next to be compiled was the al-Muwatta' of Imam Malik (died 179/795), and Rabi` ibn Sabih of Basra was the first man to compile a book with different chapters.

Al-Sihah al-Sittah or the 'Six Authentic Texts'

The work of compilation of hadith continued until the time of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, who were followed by al-Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud al-Sijistani, al-Nasa'i and others.[40] Imam Malik, who lived in Mecca in his al-Muwatta' compiled the ahadith with a sequence based on the principles of jurisprudence.[41] Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, in his Musnad classified the ahadith in various chapters each devoted to a separate Companion of the Prophet (S) from whom the narration was quoted.[42] After them Imam al-Bukhari classified the traditions according to region: he devoted separate sections to ahadith narrated by people of Hijaz, Iraq and Syria. Imam Muslim deleted the repetitive ahadith and put them in various chapters corresponding with various aspects of fiqh and other chapters dealing with biographical details. After them, Abu Da'ud, al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasa'i extended the scope of the work devoting greater attention to classification of the material.[43]

Works Based on Al-Sihah Al-Sittah

The period of the first compilers of hadith was followed by those who compiled their own collections from al-Sihah al-Sittah, summarizing and rearranging the ahadith such as `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Hamid ibn Abu Bakr, Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Raqani and Abu Mas`ud Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Dimashqi who combined the books of al-Bukhari and Muslim.

After them, Abu al-Hasan Zarin ibn Mu`awiyah combined the books of al-Muwatta' and al-Jami` of al-Tirmidhi and the Sunan of Abu Da'ud and al-Nasa'i and the works of Muslim and Bukhari. After him Ibn Athir combined the six classical texts (al-sihah al-sittah) and the book of Zarin, producing a work more organized than that of Zarin. After that al-Suyuti combined al-sihah al-sittah and the ten masanid (plural of musnad) and called his book Jam` al-Jawami', which however retains several weak ahadith.[44]

Conclusion

To sum up, it may be said that the primary purpose of the first compilers of hadith was to record the narrations without any attention to the principles and techniques of compilation and

bookwriting. It may even be said that in the beginning the purpose was not even that of composing a book; rather the aim was to record and preserve the ahadith in individual notebooks.

During the second stage, though there was a conscious purpose of composing books, the works had many defects; for the ahadith lacked order and classification forcing the reader to go through the whole book while searching for a certain hadith.

The third phase was that of classification of the ahadith in which every author divided them into chapters in his own way: one would classify them on the basis of fiqhi issues and another preferred classification according to the land of origin of the narrators.

During the fourth phase, the compilers deleted the repetitive ahadith making the job of the reader a bit easier.

In the fifth phase, the experts of hadith began to examine the traditions from various angles, such as studying them from the point of view of various jurists and for discovery of new points - a matter which we shall discuss in greater detail in a proper chapter. During this stage the whole bulk of hadith came under critical study and endeavour was made to collect them in a single work.[45]

Notes:

[1]. `Ilm al-hadith, Al-Sunnah qabl al-tadwin, p. 16. See also Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, vol. V, p.398; Tadrib al-rawi, pp.4-5.

[2]. Tadrib al-rawi.

[3]. Ibid, p.6; see also Kashf al-zunun and Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, vol. V, p. 398.

[4]. `Ilm al-hadith, p.9.

[5]. Nihayat al-dirayah, p.7; Al-Sunnah qabl al-tadwin, p. 16; Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh vol. V. p. 399.

[6]. Tadrib al-rawi, p.6.

[7]. Ibid; see also Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, vol. V, 399; see also Tadrib al-rawi, p.6.

[8]. `Ilm al-hadith, p. 4.

[9]. Nihayat ai-dirayah.

[10]. Dehkhudi, Loghatnameh, vol V, 398; see also The Encyclopedia of Islam, p.28.

[11]. Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, p. 279. See also Husayn ibn Muhammad Taqi Nuri al-Tabarsi, Fasl al-khitab, pp.5-7; 1298.

[12]. A`yan al-shi`ah, vol. I, p.274; Da'irat al-ma'arif al-Imamiyyah, p.70; `Ilm al-hadith; Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-huffaz, p.10.

[13]. There is no doubt that the "Four-hundred Usul", which will be mentioned later in our discussion, were based on the traditions conveyed by the Ahl al-Bayt.

[14]. Tadrib al-rawi, p.285.

[15]. Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, p.5.

[16]. Ibid. p.7. See also Fajr al-Islam, p.265, Parto-e Islam, 245.

[17]. Da'irat al-ma'arif al-Imamiyyah, p.69. Tadrib al-rawi. Kashf al-zunun, p. 637.

[18]. Kashf al-zunun, p.637. Ta'ssi al-shi`ah, pp.278-279. Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, p.298. Taqrib al-tahdhib , p. 333. Wafayat al-a`yan, p.338. Fjr al-Islam, p. 265.

[19]. Ta'sis al-shi`ah, p.280. Najashi, kitab al-Rijal, pp.23, Da'irat al ma`arif al-Imamiyyah, pp.69-70. Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, vol.1, p.298. Al-Dhari`ah, vol.1, p. 14.

[20]. A`yan al-shi`ah, vol. I, p.274. Da'irat al-ma`arif al-Imamiyyah, p.69. Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, vol. IV, pp.73-74.

[21]. Da'irat al-ma`arif al-Imamiyyah, p. 70. Ta'sis al-shi`ah, pp.280-287. See also Tadrib al-rawi and Kashf al-zunun, p. 637-638.

[22]. Fajr al-Islam, pp.265-267. Ta'sis al-shi`ah, p.278. See also Tadrib al-rawi, Kashf al-zunun, pp.637-638.

[23]. Ibid, pp.266-268.

[24]. Kashf al-zunun, p.637.

[25]. `Ilm al-hadith, p.13. Maktab-e Tashayyu', Ordibehesht 1339, pp.58-61.

[26]. Ibid. See also Fajr al-Islam, p.265 and Parto-e Islam, p.264.

[27]. Tadrib al-rawi, "Introduction", `Ilm al-hadith.

[28]. Ibid. See also Fajr al-Islam, p.262 and `Ilm al-hadith.

[29]. Al-Dhari`ah, vol.11, pp 125-135 The Catalogue of the Library of the University of Tehran, p.1088 See also Nihayat al dirayah p 12.

[30]. The catalogue of the Library of University of Tehran, pp. 1089-1095 See also Al-Dhari`ah which mentions 117 Usul.

[31]. Da'irat al-ma`arif al-Imamiyyah, p. 70; Ta'sis al-shi`ah, p. 288. `Ilm al-hadith.

[32]. Ibid. See `Ilm al-hadith, p. 56.

[33]. Ta'sis al-shi`ah, p.288. Tusi, al-Fihrist, `Ilm al-hadith, p. 57.

[34]. Da'irat al-ma`arif al-Imamiyyah, p. 70. Ta'sis al-shi`ah, p. 289; `Ilm al-hadith, p.57.

[35]. `Ilm al-hadith, p.52. See also Da'irat al-ma`arif al-Imamiyyah.

[36]. Al-Dhari`ah, vol.11, pp.17-19. See also the Catalogue of the University of Tehran pp.82-100-154-1277. Also refer to Ta'sis al-shi`ah. p.290.

[37]. The catalogue of the Library of the University of Tehran, p.1628.

[38]. Ta'sis al-shi`ah, p.289.

[39]. This is a Sunni viewpoint not accepted by the Shi`ah as being historically correct. Nevertheless, Ibn Jurayj and/or Rabi` ibn Sabih are considered pioneers among the Ahl al-Sunnah by themselves. According to the Shi`ah, Abu Rafi`, after the Household of the Prophet, was the first man to record and compile ahadith. See Ta'sis al-shi`ah, p.280, Najashi, Rijal, pp. 2-3; Da'irat al-ma`arif al-Imamiyyah, pp. 69-70; Al-Dhari`ah, vol. I, p.14; Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, vol.1. p.298.

[40]. Kashf al-zunun, p.637.

[41]. Ibn Khaldun, Tariq, p.798.

[42]. Kashf al-zunun, p.637.

[43]. Ibn Khaldun, Tariq, p. 798.

[44]. Kashf al-zunun, p.639.

[45]. Ibid, p. 637-639.

Part II

Reasons Behind Emergence of `Ilm Dirayat al-Hadith

Unfortunately on account of various reasons, some of which we shall mention shortly, the hadith did not remain immune from forgery and other problems. A great number of incorrect traditions found way into collections of prophetic sayings. The task of separating genuine traditions from apocryphal material was as necessary as that of removing weeds from a flower bed; as in case of weeds, their identification and removal was not an easy task, nor could they be left to flourish untouched, threatening the genuine material itself. This was the reason why religious scholars, in their capacity as vigilant gardeners of the Faith, began to look for ways of separating forged material from genuine hadith. They needed new tools for this task, which was not an easy one, as is evident from the fact that despite centuries of scholarly efforts the remnants of these dangerous and destructive weeds have continued to survive.

As to how these weeds found their way into the flower beds of prophetic tradition, here are some of the important reasons:

1. There were some who wilfully sprinkled the seeds of such weeds, and dedicatedly looked after their growth and survival. Amongst them were supporters of Banu Umayyah and other opponents of Islam who dissembled adherence to it.[1]

2. Emergence of various sects in Islam led to forgeries by followers of different sects who wished to produce documentary evidence in favour of their own sect and to detriment of their opponents.[2]

3. Fabrications made by the devout about virtues of piety and abstinence from evil, who imagined that by this means they would be better equipped to guide others.[3]

4. Inclusion of Jewish myths, a process which was stimulated by the popular sense of curiosity and the people's interest in the lives and times of former prophets. Such imaginative accounts are replete in narrations regarding the lives and deeds of prophets - such as the account related by al-Tabari on the authority of Ibn Munabbih. According

to this account, the serpent, formerly, had hands and legs; but since it allowed the Devil to enter its belly, God had made its limbs to sink into its stomach![4]

5. Tribal and regional prejudices and rivalries, which incited some to forge traditions to be produced as evidence of their superiority over others - as is evident from traditions related to some cities.

6. Personal ambition was another stimulant which prompted some to be included among the scholars of hadith through forgery.

7. Fabrication of hadith as a means of procurement of personal gain or of earning goodwill of the caliph in power.[5]

8. Controversies and differences among jurists (fuqaha') prompted some scholars to fabricate traditions to be invoked in support of their own legal positions.

9. Story-tellers and reciters of fables, admittedly, were not averse to letting their imagination wander into the domain of hadith.[6]

Due to the above-mentioned and other reasons besides, a critical examination of hadith was necessary. As a result of the efforts made by Muslim scholars in this regard, a new branch was created in the science of hadith; it came to be called "dirayat al-hadith".[7]

The Nihayat al-dirayah defines dirayat al-hadith in these words: "It is a science which investigates the isnad, contents, subject and the mode of transmission of ahadith, so that acceptable traditions can be separated from unacceptable ones."

Dirayat al-Hadith

The emergence of `ilm dirayat al-hadith was followed by its division into numerous branches. Certain rules and guidelines were evolved for distinguishing reliable from unreliable ahadith. The body of such rules came to be called "mustalah al-hadith", which together with `ilm al-rijal (lit. science of men), formed the means of scrutinizing hadith material. However, for this purpose, knowledge of other preliminaries such as Arabic grammar and syntax, familiarity with literary style and form, knowledge of abrogated (mansukh) and the abrogating (nasikh) verses of the Qur'an, knowledge of the history of Islam and that of various Islamic sects and their beliefs, and other details regarding hadith, is necessary.

Haji Khalifah, in his Kashf al-zunun defines `ilm al-dirayah in this manner: "`Ilm dirayat al-hadith, which discusses the content and meaning of the words of hadith on the basis of Arabic grammar and syntax, and shar`i criteria, and examines their correspondence with the

circumstances of the Messenger of Allah (S), linguistic standards of Arabic sciences and reports about the Messenger (S), consists of `ilm al-rijal, (the science of narrators, their names, genealogical lineages, lifetimes, their dates of death, their characters and circumstances of reception and transmission of hadith, as well as its topic or subject) and aims to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable traditions. It entails classification of various modes of transmission, linguistic background of narrators, their remarks and criticism about what they have narrated, their connection with the prior source from whom they have received, knowledge of possession of permission (ijazah)[8] by a narrator, and knowledge of various classifications of hadith, such as sahih, hasan, da`if, etc."[9]

`Ilm al-Rijal

The following verse of the Qur'an made it incumbent upon al-muhaddithin (scholars of hadith) to make a thorough enquiry into details of narrators of ahadith:

> O believers, if an ungodly man comes to you with a report, investigate, lest you afflict a people unwittingly and then repent of what you have done. (49:6)

As to who were pioneers in this field, it must be admitted that the Shi`ah had taken a lead in this field. The first writer to compile a book on this subject was Abu Muhammad `Abd Allah ibn Jibillah ibn Hayyan al-Kanani (died 219/834).[10] But according to Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti in his Kitab al-'awa'il, the first writer on `ilm al-rijal was Shu`bah (died 260/87374).[11] However, it is clear that the statement of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti does not correspond with historical fact, for `Abd Allah ibn Jibillah died forty years before Shu`bah.

Another important point that should be noted here is that writing of chronicles of persons or biographical accounts was current amongst the Shi`ah from the very early days of Islam. If this is taken into account, Abu Rafi` and his desendents took a lead before all others.[12]

Some books on `ilm al-rijal give biographical accounts of narrators without giving the dates of their death, such as Ta'rikh of Ibn Jarir, Muruj al-dhahab of al-Mas`udi, aI-Kamjl fi al-ta'rikh of Ibn al-Athir. Some give dates of death without biographical accounts. Others, being more comprehensive, give almost all essential details, such as the works of Abu al-Faraj Jawzi and al-Dhahabi.[13]

Five Important Shi'ite Works

The most important books compiled by Shi`ah scholars on `ilm al-rijal are five. They are:

1. Kitab al-rijal by Abi al-`Abbas Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Najashi (died 450/1058), which later became known merely as "al-Najash", gives accounts of lives of narrators who

have compiled books, giving little attention to others. Though the biographical accounts are given in an alphabetical order, the compilation is not very orderly. However, later, through the efforts of Kazim al-Ansari (died 1006/1597-8), Mulla `Inayat Allah Quhpa'i (died 1016/1607- 8) - the author of Majma` al-rijal - and Shaykh Dawud ibn al-Hasan al-Bahrayni (died 1104/1692-3), these defects have been removed.

2. Kitab al-fihrist, by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi, known as "Shaykh al-Ta'ifah" (died 460/1067-8). This book gives the biographical accounts in an alphabetical order. Moreover, several others have worked upon it.

3. Kitab al-rijal, also by al-Tusi, in which he gives the names of the contemporaries of every Imam (A) in the order of their succession.

4. Ma`rifat akhbar al-rijal, by `Umar ibn Muhammad al-Kashshi.

5. Al-Du`afa' by Ibn al-Ghada'iri, Ahmad ibn al-Husayn ibn `Abd Allah, a scholar of the fifth century Hijrah.

Important Books Composed by Scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah

The most important books compiled in the field of `ilm al-rijal by scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah are four:

1. Kitab Ibn Mandah, Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Yahya (died 301/913-14).

2. Hilyat al-'awliya' by Abi Nu`aym al-'Isfahani (died 430/1038-9).

3. Kitab Abi Musa, Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr al-'Isfahani (died 581/1185-6), which is a continuation of the work of Ibn Mandah.

4. Al-'Isti`ab by Ibn `Abd al-Birr.

After the above four works, other writings on `ilm al-rijal by Sunni scholars were primarily based on them. `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Athir al-Jazari (died 630/1132-3) brought them together in his Usd al-ghabah. AI-Dhahabi produced a summarized version of Usd al-ghabah in his Tajrid Asma' al-Sahabah, adding some new entries. Badr al-Din Muhammad al-Qudsi and Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Kashghari, too, produced their own condensed versions of the Usd al-ghabah.[14]

A point worthy of notice here is that Shi`ah scholars of `ilm al-rijal, in the fifth and sixth centuries, named such books as were exclusively related to Shi`ite narrators of hadith as

"rijal", calling accounts of others, including both Shi`ah and Sunni narrators, as "ta'rikh".[15] Another notable point is that, in the past, there existed a mutual, inseparable link between the three disciplines of dirayat al-hadith, `ilm rijal al-hadith and bibliography. Works dealing with one of the topics, invariably discussed issues connected with the other disciplines.

Important Scholars of al-Rijal

The most important authors who have compiled works on `ilm al-rijal are following:[16]

1. `Ubayd Allah ibn Abi Rafi`.
2. Muhammad ibn Ishaq (died 151/768), grandson of Yasar. His work is called Madrak al-'Isti`ab.
3. Al-Tabari, Abu Ja`far (died 210/825-6). His work, too, is called Madrak al-'Isti`ab.
4. `Abd Allah ibn Jibillah ibn Hannan (died 219/834). He compiled a book on `ilm al-rijal.[17]
5. Al-Yaqtini, Muhammad ibn `Isa ibn `Ubayd ibn Yaqtin. He is an author of a book on `ilm al-rijal.[18]
6. Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Nu`aym, son of Shadhan Nishaburi. He is the author of al-Tarajim.
7. Al-Hasan ibn Mahbub (died 224/838-9). His works are al-Mashikhah[19] and Ma`rifat ruwat al-akhbar.[20]
8. Ahmad ibn al-Husayn ibn `Abd al-Malik al-'Azudi. He rearranged al-Mashikhah in an alphabetical order.
9. Al-Muharibi, Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn al-Hasan. He is the author of a work on `ilm al-rijal.
10. Al-Jazawini, `Ali ibn al-`Abbas is the author of al-Mamduhun wa al-madhmumun.
11. Al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Faddal al-Fatahi (died 224/838-9). He is the author of a work on `ilm al-rijal.
12. Muhammad ibn Sa`d, al-Azhari al-Basri al-Waqidi (died 230/844-5). His fifteen-volume Kitab al-tabaqat al-kubra has been reprinted. Al-Suyuti (died 911/1505-6) has

compiled a condensed version of it.

13. Al-Waqidi, Muhammad ibn `Umar, teacher of Muhammad ibn Sa`d al-Waqidi, has a work on al-rijal called Madrak al-'Isti`ab.

14. `Ali ibn al-Madyani (died 234/848-9). He compiled a chronicle extending over ten volumes.

15. `Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali, son of Faddal al-Fatahi, compiled a work on `ilm al-rijal.

16. Khalifah ibn al-Khayyat (died 240/854-5) is the author of Madrak al-'Isti`ab.

17. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Isma`il ibn Mughirah (died 256/870), is an author of three books.

18. Muslim ibn Hajjaj (died 261/874-5). His work, too, is called al-Tabaqat.

19. Al-Barqi, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid (died 274/887-8). He is the author of Tabaqat al-rijal.

20. Al-`Ayyashi al-Samarqandi, Muhammad ibn Mas`ud, is the author of Ma`rifat al-naqilin.[21]

21. Al-Rawajini, `Abbad ibn Ya`qub, is the author of al-Ma`rifah fi ma`riifat al-sahabah. [22]

22. Al-Narmashiri, Yahya ibn Zakariyya, is the author of Manazil al-sahabah.[23]

23. Abu al-Faraj al-Qanani, son of Muhammad ibn Ya`qub, is the author of Mu`jam rijal Abi Mufaddal.[24]

24. Al-Dabili, Muhammad ibn Wahban, author of Man rawa `an Amir al-Mu'minin.[25]

25. Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi, author of Ma`rifat al-naqilin and Firaq al-Shi`ah.[26]

26. Ahmad ibn `Abd al-Wahid, author of Fihrist al-rijal.[27]

27. Ibn Abi Khuthaymah, Ahmad ibn Zuhayr (died 279/892-3), author of Madrak al-'Isti`ab.

28. Al-Haqiqi, Ahmad ibn `Ali (died 280/893-4), authored Ta'rikh al-rijal.[28]

29. Mutayyin, Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah ibn Sulayman al-Hadrami (died 297/909-10), authored Madarak al-'isabah.

30. Ibn Hazm al-Harawi (died 301/913-14).

31. Ibn Mandah, Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Yahya (died 301/913-14).

32. Hamid Naynawa'i Dihqan (died 310/922-923).

33. Al-Dulabi (died 310/922-23).

34. `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Ishaq.

35. Al-Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya`qub (died 329/940-41), the author of al-Kafi, has also compiled a work on al-rijal.[29]

36. Al-Jalludi (died 332/943-44).

37. Al-Mas`udi, `Ali ibn al-Husayn (died 333/944-45).

38. `Isa ibn Mihran.[30]

39. Ibn Battah, Muhammad ibn Ja`far Mu'addab al-Qummi.

40. Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah.

41. Ibn `Uqdah al-Hamadani (died 333/944-45). He compiled biographical accounts of 4000 figures. Reportedly, parts of his work still exist in the royal library in Yemen.[31]

42. Abu Sulayman, Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah (died 338/949-50).

43. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Ash`ari.

44. Sa`d ibn `Abd Allah al-Ash`ari.[32]

45. Al-Tabarani (died 340/951-52).

46. Ibn Walid al-Qummi (died 343/95455)[33]

47. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Ammar al-Kufi (died 346/957-58).

48. `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Zubayr al-Qurashi (died 348/959-60).

49. Ibn Sakan, Sa`id ibn `Uthman (died 353/963).

50. Ibn Habban (died 354/965).

51. Qadi al-Ja`abi, Muhammad ibn `Umar (died 355/965-66).

52. Al-Kashshi, Abu `Amr, Muhammad ibn `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, authored Ma`rifat al-naqilin, which al-Shaykh al-Tusi (died 460/1067-68) condensed under the title al-Rijal.

53. Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Dawud al-Qummi (died 368/978-79).

54. Abu Ghalib al-Zurari, Ahmad ibn Ahmad (died 368/978-79).

55. Al-Shaykh al-Saduq (died 381/991-92), compiled al-Masabih.[34] and al-Tabaqat of Ibn Sa`d.

56. Ibn Shahin (died 100%/995).

57. Ibn al-Nadim, Muhammad ibn Ishaq (died 390/1000), compiled Kitab al-fihrist.

58. Ibn Hashir, Ibn `Abdun (died 423/1023).

59. Abu Nu`aym al-'Isfahani (died 430/1038-39).

60. Muhammad ibn Abi Qurrah, teacher of al-Najashi, (died 450/1058), compiled Mu`jam rijal Abi Mufaddal.[35]

61. Abu al-`Abbas, al-Sirafi Ahmad, teacher of al-Najashi, authored al-Masabih.[36]

62. Ibn al-Ghada'iri, Ahmad ibn al-Husayn, compiled al-Rijal al-du`afa'.

63. Abu Ya`la al-Khalili (died 442/1054-55).

64. Al-Najashi, Abu al-`Abbas Ahmad ibn `Ali (died 450/1058), the author of Ma`rifat al-rijal.

65. Al-Tusi, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan (died 460/1067-68).

66. Al-Kitani (died 466/1073-74).

67. `Abd ibn Jarud.

68. Al-`Aqili.

69. Ibn Abi Hatim.

70. Al-'Azraq.

71. Ibn `Abd al-Birr (died 463/1070-71).

72. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Ahmad ibn `Ali (died 463/1070-71).

73. Ibn Fathun, Abu Bakr.

74. Shihab al-Din, Ahmad ibn Yusuf.

75. Al-'Akfani, Hibat Allah ibn Ahmad (died 466/1073-74).

76. Al-Sam`ani, `Abd al-Karim (died 562/1166-67).

77. Abu Musa, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr (died 581/1185-86).

78. Muntajab al-Din, `Ali ibn `Ubayd Allah Babawayh (died after 585/1189). He wrote Kitab al-fihrist, and a history of the Shi`ah scholars. Al-Majlisi included it at the end of vol. XXV of his Bihar al-anwar.

79. Ibn Shahr Ashub, Muhammad ibn `Ali (died 588/1192). He made additions at the end of al-Tusi's Fihrist.

80. Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi, `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Ali (died 597/1200-1)

81. Al-Muqaddasi, `Ali ibn Mufaddal (died 611/1214-15).

82. Ibn Bitriq, Yahya ibn al-Hasan (died 600/1203-4). He wrote Kitab rijal al-Shi`ah.[37]

83. Ibn al-Athir, `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jazari (died 630/1232-33) wrote Usd al-ghabah.

84. Ibn Abi Tayy, Yahya ibn Hamid al-Halabi (died 630/1232-33), wrote al-'Isti`ab.

85. Quraysh ibn al-Sabi' (died 664/1265-66) summarized al-'Isti`ab and al-Tabaqat of Ibn Sa`d.

86. `Abd al-Azim ibn `Abd al-Qawi al-Mundhiri (died 656/1285).

87. Ibn Tawus, Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Ja`far al-Hilli (died 673/1274-75) wrote Hall al-'ishkal in the year A.H. 644, and brought together in it all biographical accounts of the five major works on `ilm al-rijal: al-Kashshi, al-Najashi, al-Tusi's Rijal and Fihrist, and Ibn al-Ghada'iri's al-Du`afa'.[38]

88. Izz al-Din, Ahmad ibn Muhammad (died 656/1258).

89. Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, Ja`far ibn al-Hasan (died 676/1277-78), condensed al-Tusi's Fihrist.

90. Ibn Tawus, `Abd al-Karim ibn Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Ja`far (died 693/1293-4).

91. Ibn Dawud, al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Dawud (born 647/1249-50).

92. Al-`Allamah al-Hilli, al-Hasam ibn Yusuf (died 726/1325-26) wrote Khulasat al-'aqwat, Idah al-'Ishtibah and Kashf al-'ishtibah.

93. Al-Birzali, al-Qasim ibn Muhammad al-Dimashqi (died 738/1337-38).

94. Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din, Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn `Uthman (died 748/1347-48) summarized Usd al-ghabah.

95. Ahmad ibn Aybak al-Dimyati.

96. Ibn Rafi`, Taqi al-Din, made additions at the end of al-Birzali's work.

97. Ibn Kathir al-Dimashqi (died 774/1372-73) wrote several works on `ilm al-rijal.

98. Ibn Mu`ayyah al-Dibaji, Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn al-Husayn ibn al-Qasim al-Hilli (died 776/1374-75).

99. Ibn al-Mulaqqin, `Umar (died 804/1401-2) wrote Tabaqat al- muhaddithin.

100. Zayn al-Din al-`Iraqi, `Abd al-Rahim (died 806/1403-4) made additions at the end of Ibn Aybak al-Dimyati's work.

101. Baha' al-Din, `Ali Nili al-Hilli ibn `Abd al-Karim (died 841/1437-38), wrote Kitab al-rijal.

102. Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani, Ahmad ibn `A1i (died 852/1448) wrote Kitab al-'Isabah.

103. Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din (died 911/1505-6) summarized al-'Isabah calling it `Ayn al-isabah.

104. Al-Hasan ibn Zayn al-Din al-Shahid al-Thani (martyred 1011/1602-3) is the author of al-Ma`alim, Tahrir Tawusi, Tartib mashikhat man la yahduruh al-faqih.

105. Mulla Mustafa, translated the al-'Isti`ab upto the letter "ha"' by the orders of the `Uthmani king, Sultan Ahmad.

106. Tash Kubra-Zadeh, Kamal al-Din Muhammad (died 962/1554-55) continued the unfinished work of Mulla Mustafa to the letter "ra".

107. Yusuf ibn Muhammad al-Husayni al-`Amili (died 982/1574-75) compiled Jami` al-'aqwal and edited the Rijal of al-Kashshi.

108. `Abd al-Latif ibn `Ali ibn Shaykh Ahmad al-`Amili, pupil of the author of al-Ma`alim, (died 1011/1602-3) and Shaykh al-Baha'i (died 1031/1621-22) compiled a fihrist of narrators of the four hooks: Al-Kafi, Man la yahduruh al-faqih, al-Tahdhib and al-'Istibsar.

109. Mulla `Inayat Allah Quhpa'i, `Ali ibn Sharaf al-Din, (died 1016/ 1607-8), also like Ibn Tawus compiled a collection of the books of al-Kashshi, al-Najashi, Ibn al-Ghada'iri, al-Rijal and al-Fihrist, putting the biographical accounts in an alphabetical order. His work is called Majma` al-rijal.

110. Qadi Nur Allah al-Shushtari (martyred 1019/1610-11) wrote Majalis al-mu'minin.

111. Mulla `Abd Allah al-Shushtari (died 1021/1612) extracted the al-Du`afa' of Ibn al-Ghada'iri, which had been included in Hall al-'ishkal of Ibn Tawus.

112. Mulla `Abd al-Nabi al-Jaza'iri, ibn Sa`d (died 1021/1612) wrote Hawi al-'aqwal.

113. Mirza Muhammad al-'Astarabadi (died 1021/1612) wrote three books, of which the

most important is Manhaj al-maqal.

114. Khudawardi, 'Afshar (died 1021/1612).

115. Mirza Fayd Allah Tafrishi (died 1025/1616).

116. Mir Mustafa Tafrishi (died 1031/1621-22).

117. Nizam al-Din al-Qurashi (died 1031/1621-22).

118. Shaykh Muhammad al-Najafi (died 1085/1674-75).

119. Qutb al-Din al-'Ashkawari (died 1040/1630-31).

120. Mir Damad, Muhammad Baqir ibn Muhammad al-'Astarabadi al-Husayni al-'Isfahani (died 1040/1630-31).

121. Muhammad Taqi al-Majlisi al-Awwal, ibn Maqsud `Ali (died 1070/1659-60) wrote Mashikhat kitab man la yahduruh al-faqih.

122. Al-Turayhi (died 1085/1674-75).

123. Muhammad Amin al-Kazimi (died 1085/1674-75).

124. Aqa Radi al-Qazwini (died 1096/1684-85).

125. Kamal al-Din al-Husayni, Shaykh Hasan ibn `Ali al-`Amili.

126. Shaykh Hurr al-`Amili, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan (died 1104/1692-93) wrote `Amal al-'amal and Tadhkirat al-`ulama' al-muta'akhkhirin.

127. Mulla Faraj Allah al-Huwayzi.

128. Mulla Haydar `Ali al-Qummi.

129. Muhaddith al-Tawbali (died 1107/1695-96).

130. Muhammad Salih Khatunabadi al-'Isfahani (died 1116/1704-5), was the nephew of al-Majlisi II.

131. Sayyid `Ali Khan Madani (died 1120/1708-9).

132. Mulla `Abd Allah Afandi (died 1131/1718 19).

133. Mulla Muhammad al-Ardabili (died 1111/1699-1700).

134. Shaykh Sulayman al-Makhuri (died 1121/1709-10).

135. Mulla Muhammad Ja`far al-Khurasani (born 1080/1669-70).

136. Aqa Husayn al-Khwansari (died 1128/1715-16).

137. `Ali ibn `Abd Allah al-Bahrayni (died 1127/1714-15).

138. Mirza Muhammad al-Akhbari (died 1132/1719-20).

139. `Abd Allah al-Samahiji (died 1135/1722-23).

140. Shaykh Yasin al-Bahrayni (died 1145/1732 33).

141. Mir Muhammad Ibrahim, son of Mir Ma`sum al-Qazwini, (died 1145/1732-33).

142. Radi al-Din, ibn Sayyid Muhammad al-`Amili al-Musawi, (died 1168/1754-55), in a work called 'Ithaf dkawi al-'albab, has arranged the entries according to surnames ending with the letter "ya", and modelling it on Ibn al-Athir's work and al-Lubab of al-Suyuti.

143. Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Biladi (died 1186/1772-73).

144. Shaykh Yusuf (1186/1772-73) has compiled Lu'lu'at al-bahrayn.

145. Sayyid Husayn al-Qazwini (died 1208/1793-94).

146. `Abd al-Nabi ibn Muhammad (died 1191/1777).

147. Sayyid Mahdi Bahr al-`ulum al-Burujerdi al-Najafi (died 1212/1797-98).

148. Abu `Ali, Muhammad ibn Isma`il (died 1215/1800-1).

149. Sayyid Ahmad al-Kazimi.

150. Dawud ibn al-Hasan al-Jaza'iri, worked on Ikhtiyar al-rijal of al-Kashshi, and al-Rijal

of al-Najashi.

151. Muhammad Tahir ibn Muhammad Talib al-Husayni al-'Ardabili.

152. Shaykh Yahya, who was a mufti of Bahrayn.

153. Mulla Darwish `Ali al-Ha'iri.

154. Sayyid Muhsin al-'A`raji al-Kazimayni (died 1227/1812).

155. Sayyid `Abd Allah Shubbar ibn Muhammad Rida (died 1242/1826-27).

156. Muhammad `Ali ibn al-Qasim Al Shakur al-Ha'iri (died 1245/1829-30).

157. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir, Hujjat al-Islam Shafti (died 1260/1844).

158. Shaykh `Abd al-Nabi al-Kazimi (died 1256/1840).

159. Mulla `Ali Kani al-Tehrani (died 1306/1888-89).

160. Shaykh Murtada al-'Ansari (died 1281/1864-65).

161. Ibrahim ibn Husayn ibn `Ali.

162. Haji Nuri, Husayn ibn Muhammad Taqi.

163. Muhammad Taha Najaf (died 1323/1905), son of Mahdi, son of Muhammad Rida al-Tabrizi al-Najafi, compiled Itqan al-maqal. In this book, he divided narrators of hadith into three categories: truthful, righteous and weak.

164. Al-Mamaqani, Shaykh `Abd Allah ibn Shaykh Hasan (died 1350/1931-32).

165. Sayyid Muhsin al-`Amili (died 1370/1950-51) wrote 'A`yan al-Shi`ah, of which thirty-four volumes have been printed in Syria.

166. Aqa Buzurg, Muhammad Muhsin al-Tehrani, wrote al-Dhari`ah 'ila tasanif al-shi`ah, in which he devoted each volume to figures of every century starting from the fourth century Hijrah. He also compiled a work on history of `ilm al-rijal with the title Musaffa al-maqal. In this book he has given biographical accounts of six-hundred narrators.

Notes:

[1]. See Muhaqqiq's introduction to al-Suyuti's Tadrib al-rawi; al-Madinah 1379/1959. One instance of this case is the "hadith" which was forged regarding the following verse of the Holy Qur'an on the orders of Mu`awiyah:

And among men is he who sells himself in exchange for God's good pleasure....(2:207)

Through this forgery, an attempt was made to relate this verse to Ibn Muljam, the assassin of Imam `Ali (A); whereas, in reality, this verse is related to `Ali (A) himself, who exposed himself to the danger of death by lying in the Prophet's (S) bed on the night of his hijrah to al-Madinah. See also Kazim Mudir Shanehchi, `Ilm al-hadith, p. 66; Mashhad University 1964-65

[2]. See Muhaqqiq's introduction to al-Suyuti's Tadrib al rawi al Madinah 1379/1959. See also Ahmad Amin Fajral Islam, p. 255; Egypt 1347/1928.

Ahmad ibn Nasr says: "The Prophet in reply [to a question that he had put] said, 'Hold on to al-Shafi`i for he is from me and God is with him and his followers."' See Kazim Mudir Shanehchi `Ilm al hadith, p. 69, Mashhad University 1964-65.

[3]. The Encyclopedia of Islam, pp. 24, 25. Ahmad Amin, Fajr al Islam, p.256; Egypt 1347/1928. See also Parto e Islam vol I p. 258. An instance of this is the case of Abi `Ismah Nuh ibn Abi Maryam whose practice was to forge a tradition in relation to every surah of the Qur'an. Once when asked about the source of his narrations, he said, "Since people started turning towards the fiqh of Abi Hanifah and the chronicles of Muhammad ibn Ishaq they have been neglecting to memorize the Qur'an by heart. I have fabricated these traditions only for the sake of God's good pleasure." See Parto e Islam p. 258 and Fajral Islam p. 256.

[4]. Partoe Islam, vol.11, pp. 356, 100%.

[5]. An instance of this is the case of Ghiyath ibn Ibrahim, who once on visiting the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur saw him playing with pigeons. On the spur of the moment, he fabricated a "hadith" for the caliph's good pleasure: The Prophet said, "No racing is better than that of hoofs and feathers." See Fajr al-'Islam, p. 255, and Partoe Islam, vol. I, p.258. Abu Hurayrah once fabricated a "hadith" about onions of Akka (seaport in Palestine). Asked by Mu'awiyah as to where the Prophet said such a thing, he answered, "there where he said, 'Mu'awiyah is the maternal uncle of the faithful (khal al-mu'minin)'."

[6]. Kazim Mudir Shanehchi, `Ilm al-hadith, pp.74,75, Mashhad University, 1344 A.H. According to Ibn al-Jawzi, once Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahya ibn Ma`in were in the mosque of al-Rasifah (in Baghdad) for prayers. In the meanwhile, a storyteller gathered around himself some people and began to recite a tradition, citing as his sources Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahya ibn Ma`in, that the Prophet said, "whoever says, 'La ilaha illa Allah', God will reward him with a bird whose beak is of gold and feathers of coral." Then he proceeded to describe the bird and

the reward of the recipient in such a detail as can not be contained even in twenty pages. On hearing him, Yahya and ibn Hanbal looked at each other while the "muhaddith" started collecting tips from the people. Yahya approached the man and asked him as to who had told him this tradition. "Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahya ibn Ma`in," was his reply. "I am Yahya and this is Ahmad ibn Hanbal", said Yahya pointing to Ibn Hanbal, "we ourselve have never heard of such a tradition." The storyteller replied, 'I had heard that Yahya ibn Ma`in is an idiot I didn't believe it. You talk as if you two are the only Yahya and Ibn Hanbal in the whole world! I have written traditions from seventeen Yahya ibn Ma`ins and Ahmad ibn Hanbal's." Then he promptly slipped out of the mosque. See Hafiz Nishaburi Hakim Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Abd Allah, Ma`rifat ulum al hadith, p. 289; Egypt 1937.

[7]. Shaykh al-Bahi'i, Nihayat al-dirayah p. 7; `Imad al Islam Press, 1324. See also al-Suyuti's Tadrib al-rawi, pp. 4, 5; al Madinah 1379/1959.

[8]. During the earliest times the traditions were transmitted orally by teachers to students of hadith. One who had leant traditions in this way under the direction of a teacher could, in his turn, again communicate them to others. Ijazah (lit. permit) was the term for a teacher's sanction granted to those considered reliable by him for further transmission of traditions to others.

[9]. Haji Khalifah, Mustafa ibn `Abd Allah, Kashf al-zunun `an asami al-kutub wa al-funun, pp.635-636; 1360/1941.

[10]. Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, p.233; see also al-Najashi's Ma`rifat ahwal al-rijal, p.340; Bombay 1317.

[11]. Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, Ta'sis al-Shi`ah.

[12]. Al-Najashi, Ma`rifat ahwal al-rijal. See Shaykh Aqa Buzurg al-Tehrani, Muhammad Muhsin, al-Dhari`ah ila tasanif al-Shi`ah, vol. III, p. 224. See also Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, p.232.

[13]. Haji Khalifah, Kashf al-zunun `an asami al-kutub wa al-funun, p.834, 1360.

[14]. See the Catalogue of the Library of University of Tehran, p.503.

[15]. Shaykh Aqa Buzurg al-Tehrani, al-Dhari`ah ila tasanif al-Shi`ah, vol.111, p. 224.

[16]. The names in this list are of those who have worked on history or `ilm al-rijal, regardless of whether they were merely chroniclers or those whose work was aimed at distinguishing reliable from unreliable narrators. The names in the list have been taken from the Catalogue of the Library of University of Tehran.

[17]. Al-Najashi, Ma`rifat ahwal al-rijal, p.235; Bombay 1317.

[18]. Ibid.

[19]. Al-Tusi, Kitab al-fihrist, p.47; Najaf 1359/1937.

[20]. Tawdih al-maqal, p.65.

[21]. Al-Najashi, Ma`rifat ahwal al-rijal, 248; Bombay 1317.

[22]. Al-Tusi, Kitab al-fihrist, p.119; Najaf 1359/1937.

[23]. Al-Najashi, Ma`rifat ahwal al-rijal, p.309; Bombay 1317.

[24]. Ibid., p.283.

[25]. Ibid., p. 282.

[26]. Ibid., p.302.

[27]. Tawdih al-maqal, p.65.

[28]. Al-Najashi, Ma`rifat ahwal al-rijal, p.59.

[29]. Ibid., p.267.

[30]. Al-Tusi, Kitab al-fihrist, p.116.

[31]. Ibid., p. 28; al-Najashi, Ma`rifat ahwal al-rijal, pp.68, 69; See also the Catalogue of the Library of Tehran University.

[32]. Al-Tusi, Kitab al-fihrist, 75; al-Najashi, Ma'rifat ahwal al-rijal, p. 126.

[33]. Al-Najashi, Ma'rifat ahwal al-rijal, p.23.

[34]. Ibid., pp. 276, 278.

[35]. Ibid., p.283.

[36]. Ibid., p.63; al-Tusi, Kitab al-fihrist, p.37.

[37]. Shaykh Aqa Buzurg al-Tehrani, al-Dhari`ah ila tasanif al-Shi`ah, vol.111, p. 222.

[38]. Ibid., vol. VII, p.64.

Part III

Disciplines of `Ilm al-Hadith

At the time of its emergence, there was a difference of opinion among men of eminence among Muslims about the very necessity of hadith. The first two caliphs, for example, exhibited a complete lack of interest in it.[1] Nevertheless, after the death of the Prophet (S), its importance was gradually realized. This realization grew with time, to the extent that it became necessary for religious scholars to consider hadith as the second authoritative source after the Qur'an for solution of their canonical problems. The importance of hadith grew steadily with time, until it took the shape of a vast science with numerous disciplines.

Al-Suyuti, in introduction to his Tadrib al-rawi, writes that at the beginning of the second century of Hijrah, the sciences related to hadith consisted of three disciplines: `ilm tadwin al-hadith, `ilm al-hadith, and `ilm usul al-hadith. However, during the third century, according to Ibn al-Mulaqqin, the science of hadith came to consist of more than two hundred disciplines. Abu Hatam, according to a more simple classification, has mentioned the existence of fifty separate disciplines. Ibn Hajar describes the various disciplines more simply in this fashion: `ilm usul al-hadith, `ulum al-hadith, `ilm mustalah al-hadith, and `ilm dirayat al-hadith (which also includes `ilm al-rijal).[2]

Ahmad Amin, in his Fajr al-Islam, says: "The study of hadith was followed by the birth of various disciplines, such as chronicles of history, wars, and merits of peoples and persons. This was followed by writing of biographies, such as the work of Ibn Hisham. According to Ibn Jarir, Ibn Ishaq and al-Baladhuri, their style and method was that of hadith narration. The anecdotes of the lives and times of former prophets, together with the hadith and the anecdotes mentioned in the Qur'an, helped to expand the literature dealing with the former prophets. The interest in hadith stimulated the study of Greek, Indian and Persian philosophy and ethics. `Ilm al-hadith stimulated popular interest in all sciences, and itself became a religious and canonical source, and, above all, the source of civil and penal codes. All this, avoiding further elaboration, bears testimony to the role played by `ilm al-hadith in expansion of the sciences."[3]

According to al-Suyuti, al-Hazimi considered `ilm al-hadith to consist of more than a hundred disciplines; Ibn Salah has mentioned 65 of these various disciplines.[4] Ibn Khaldun, in his work on history, mentions the following branches of `ilm al-hadith: the study of the nasikh

and mansukh verses of the Qur'an, `ilm al-rijal, `ilm istilahat al-hadith, study of the text of hadith and its peculiarities, study of the qualifications necessary for a narrator to transmit hadith, knowledge of veracity of transmitters, and `ilm fiqh al-hadith.[5]

However, Hakim Abi `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah Hafiz al-Nishaburi, in his book Ma`rifat `ulum al-hadith, mentions fifty-two disciplines in the science of hadith. In view of its importance, we mention them here:

1. Recognition of al-hadith al-`ali: On page 5 of his book, he says that recognition of the hadith `ali al-'asnad (a tradition all of whose narrators are known and veracious) is a part of `ilm al-hadith. He mentions further that besides the condition that the chain of transmitters of a hadith `ali should be as short as possible, the transmitters must, in addition, be all veracious.

2. Recognition of al-hadith al-nazil: On page 7, he says that identification of al-hadith al-nazil is also a branch of `Ilm al-hadith. Some have defined al-hadith al-nazil as the opposite of al-hadith a/-'ali, but this definition is insufficient. In fact, there are various degrees of the al-hadith al-nazil recognizable only for the experts. In this category are included the ahadith which require more than the ordinary amount of learning and scholarship.

3. Study of the veracity of narrators: On page 14, he includes this also as part of `Ilm al-hadith. Biographical details, level of knowledge and degree of carefulness of a narrator are issues related to this subject.

4. Knowledge of masanid of hadith: On page 17, he says that knowledge of the masanid (first narrator in the chain of transmission) of a hadith is an important subject. There is a disagreement among leading Islamic jurists about the validity of ahadith which are not musnadah. Al-hadith al-musnad is one which has reached us from one of the well-known Companions of the Messenger of God (S).

5. Study of al-riwayat al-mawqufah: On page 19, he discusses the study of al-riwayat al-mawqufah. Al-riwayat al-mawqufah is one whose primary source is one of the Companions of the Prophet (S).

6. Study of those ahadith whose first narrator is not mentioned. Al-Nishaburi discusses this topic on page 21.

7. Study of the Companions (al-Sahabah): This study involves the history of Companions, whether they belonged to the Ansar (the Helpers) or to the Muhajirun (the Emigrants), and their station and degree of nearness to the Prophet (S).

8. Study of al-hadith al-mursal: Discussing this topic on page 25, he includes it among the most difficult in `Ilm al-hadith, and says that none except the most learned can handle this subject. Al-hadith al-mursal is a tradition narrated by someone belonging to the next generation (the Tabi'un) after the Prophet.

9. Study of al-hadith al-munqati': On page 27, he states that al-hadith al-munqati' is different from al-mursal, although like al-mursal it is one narrated by one of the Tabi'un. There are three kinds of al-hadith al-munqati'.

10. Study of transmitters of al-hadith al-musalsal: On page 29, he states that there are eight types of this kind of hadith.

11. Study of al-hadith al-mu'an'an: On page 34 of his work, al-Nishaburi includes the study of non- counterfeit ahadith mu'an'anah (lit. transmitted) as part of `Ilm al-hadith.

12. Study of al-hadith al-mu'dal: On page 36, he quotes the definition given by `Ali ibn `Abd Allah al-Madini, the great scholar of hadith, and his predecessors of al-hadith al-mu'dal as a tradition whose two or more links of transmitters are missing.

13. Study of the al-hadith al-mudarraj: On page 39, he defines al-hadith al-mudarraj as a tradition in which the narrator has included his own words or that of a Companion or someone else in the text of hadith.

14. Study of al-Tabi`un (persons belonging to the next generation after the Prophet (S) and his Companions): On page 41, including the study of lives of the Tabi'un in `Ilm al-hadith, he remarks that this in itself involves several separate disciplines.

15. Study of the Atba' al-Tabi'in (persons belonging to the second generation after the Prophet): On page 46, this is also said to be included in `Ilm al-hadith.

16. Study of al-akabir 'an al-asaghir: On page 48, he includes the study of al-akabir 'an al-asaghir (lit. 'the greater from the lesser ones', said of traditions related by someone senior in age or knowledge from one junior to him in one of these aspects, or by a prolific narrator from one less prolific in narration of hadith) in `Ilm al-hadith.

17. Study of the descendents of the Companions: On page 49, he states that anyone who lacks knowledge on this subject is bound to make errors in regard to many traditions.

18. `Ilm jarh wa ta'dil (lit. challenging the validity, and settlement, or amendment): On page 82, he states that this involves two distinct disciplines.

19. Study of al-sahih and al-saqim (said of hadith): On page 58, he states that this study is

different from `Ilm jarh wa ta'dil mentioned before.

20. `Ilm fiqh al-hadith.

21. Study of the nasikh and mansukh in hadith.

22. Study of uncommon words in the text of hadith: On page 88, he states that this study began after the period of the Atba' al-Tabi'in. Among those who pursued it were Malik, al-Thawri, Shu'bah, and others who came after them. The first to compile a work on the uncommon aspects of hadith (`Ilm ghara'ib al-hadith) was Nadr ibn Shumayl.

23. Study of the al-hadith al-mashhur (lit. famous): On page 92, he points out the distinction between al-hadith al-sahih (veracious hadith) and al-hadith al-mashhur.

24. Study of the al-hadith al-gharib (uncommon): He states on page 94 that it is related to the study mentioned above (no.22); for there are various aspects of uncommonness.

25. Study of al-hadith al-mufrad (al-khabar al-wahid): He states on page 96 that this study involves three kinds of hadith: firstly, those narrated by one from al-Madinah, Makkah or Kufah; secondly, those narrated by one of the Imams; thirdly, those narrated by someone besides the above two.

26. Study of apocryphal narrators: Study of those narrators who do not make a distinction between the narrated text and their own words.

27. Study of deficiencies found in hadith: On page 112, he states that this study is distinct from `Ilm jarh wa ta'dil and the study of al-saqim and al-sahih.

28. Study of al-hadith al-shadh (lit. rare): On page 119, he states that it is a tradition narrated from only one veracious narrator.

29. Study of prophetic traditions which conflict with others, and which are relied upon by founders of one of the fiqh schools.

30. Recognition of traditions which are not contradicted by any other.

31. Study of the various schools of the muhaddithun.

32. Study of the process of memorization of hadith (`Ilm mudhakarat al-hadith).

33. Study and recognition of additional words in hadith.

34. Study of al-tashif (slip of pen, misspelling, misplacement of diacritical marks etc.) in manuscripts.

35. Study of such errors by the muhaddithun in manuscripts of their ahadith.

36. Study of the lives of brothers and sisters of the Sahabah, the Tabi'un, and their descendents up to the present times.

37. Study of the lives of the Sahabah, the Tabi'un, and Tabi' al-Tabi'in from whom not more than one narrator has transmitted.

38. Study of the tribes of narrators, including the Sahabah, the Tabi'un, and Tabi' al-Tabi'in up to the present.

39. Study of genealogies of the muhaddithun, from al-Sahabah up to the present. On page 168, he says that study of genealogies has been recommended by the Prophet (S). On page 169, he quotes this tradition on the authority of Abu Hurayrah:

    Know your genealogies, so as to fulfil your duties to your kin.[6]

40. Study of the names of the muhaddithun: On page 177, he says, "Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari has met the complete needs of this study by his book."

41. Study of surnames (kuna pl. of kunyah) of the Sahabah, the Tabi'un, and their descendents up to the present. On page 83, he says that the scholars of hadith have compiled many works on this subject.

42. Knowledge of the homelands and regions of hadith narrators.

43. Study of the mawali [7] among the narrators of hadith from among the Sahabah, the Tabi'un and their descendents.

44. Study of the lives, dates of death and birth of the muhaddithun.

45. Study of the titles of the muhaddithun.

46. Study of contiguous narrators. On page 215, he says that this study is different from

that of al-akabir 'an al-asaghir; rather it relates to narrators who relate from those contiguous to them.

47. Study of similarities between the tribes of narrators, their homelands, names, nicknames, and accomplishments. In this regard he mentions five secondary disciplines, such as the study of tribes, the study of their homelands, etc.

48. Study of the battles of the Holy Prophet (S) and his epistles written to kings and others.

49. Study of the well-known pioneers of hadith collection from among the Sahabah, the Tabi'un and their descendents.

50. Study of the mode of classification of hadith into various chapters by the muhaddithun.

51. Study of a group of narrators from the Tabi'un and their descendents, regarding whose reliability in case of al-hadith al-sahih the evidence is inconclusive.

52. Study of those who received an ijazah from a scholar for transmitting ahadith. [8]

In addition to the above, there are other disciplines linked with the study of Arabic morphology, syntax, and philology, as mentioned by al-Suyuti in his al-'Itqan.[9] In this regard, it may be mentioned that Ibn al-Nadim in his Kitab al-Fihrist, quoting Muhammad ibn Ishaq and other scholars, says that Abu al-'Aswad al-Du'ali, the first Arab grammarian, acquired it from `Ali ibn Abi Talib (A).[10] Following this, he quotes a statement from Abu Nasr that `Abd al-Rahman ibn Hurmuz is the foundation layer of Arabic studies and that Abu Sa`id al-Sirafi had confirmed this. Furthermore, Ibn al-Nadim explaining the origin of the name 'nahw' for Arabic syntax says that Abu al-'Aswad had asked for `Ali's (A) permission to formulate rules of Arabic grammar similar (nahw) to what `Ali (A) had done in his discourses.

Those who had learnt Arabic grammar from Abu al-'Aswad al-Du'ali, according to Ibn al-Nadim, are: Yahya ibn Ya'mur, 'Anbasah ibn Ma'dan and Maymun ibn Aqran.[11]

Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, in his Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, writing about the origins of `Ilm dirayat al-hadith, says that the first to compile a work on this subject was Abu `Abd Allah Hakim al-Nishaburi, a Shi'ite (d. 100%/1014-15), and Ibn Salah, who came after him, was his follower. However, al-Suyuti, in his Kitab al-wasa'il fi awa'il, states that Ibn Salah, Abu 'Amr `Uthman ibn `Abd al-Rahman (d. 643/1051-52), a Shafi'i from Damascus, was the first to work on `ilm dirayat a-hadith.[12] Evidently, al-Suyuti has shown complete indifference to the work of Abu `Abd Allah Hakim al-Nishaburi, who lived about two hundred years before Ibn Salah.

In Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, it is stated that the first to compile a book on the study of Islamic sects was al-Hasan ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti, a prominent scholar of the third century, who lived before Abu Mansur `Abd al-Qadir ibn Zahir al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037-38), Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (d. 403/1012-13), Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1062-63), and al-Shahristani (d. 548/1153-54). [13] The author of al-Adab al-Farisi not only confirms this, he also explicitly states that al-Hasan ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti was a Shi'ite:

> Several men of the house of Nawbakht excelled in the Islamic sciences and became (great) scholars of the Imamiyyah Shi'ite sect and forerunners of its mutakallimin. To them goes the great credit of providing support for this sect on the basis of its kalam. Among them was Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti (d. 300 or 301 A. H.), the author of the book Firaq al-Shi`ah and al-'Ara' wa al-diyanat; also he was the first to write a book on the subject of al-milal wa al-nihal (study of nations and sects): [14]

The author of Tadrib al-rawi writing about the origins of `ilm 'istilahat al-hadith, says that the first to compile a work on this subject was Qadi Abu Muhammad al-Ramhurmuzi, the author of Kitab muhaddith al-fadil, followed by Hakim Abu `Abd Allah al-Nishaburi, Abu Nu'aym al-'Isfahani, and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi.[15]

In regard to the history of the military campaigns (al-maghazi) of the Prophet (S), which is a part of `ilm al-rijal, the author of Ta'sis al-Shi`ah says that the first to write on this subject was Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Matlabi. Elsewhere, he quotes a statement from Khulasat al-'aqwal relating to `Ubayd Allah ibn Abi Rafi', who was 'Ali's scribe, as being the first to write on the Prophet's battles.[16] This is also confirmed by al-Najashi in his al-Rijal.[17] Al-Suyuti, however, in his Kitab al-wasa'il fi al-awa'il considers 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (d. 94/712-13) as being the pioneer in writing on al-maghazi.

With regard to historiography, according to Kash al-zunun, the first to write on this subject was Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 151/768) the forerunner among the writers of al-maghazi.

According to al-Suyuti, the first to compile a musnad was Sulayman ibn Dawud Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi.[18] As to `ilm dirayat al-hadith, the first to write on this subject was Sayyid Jamal al-Din Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Tawus Abu al-Fada'il (d. 673/1274-75), the teacher of `Allamah ibn Mutahhar al-Hilli. He formulated new Shi'ite terms in hadith (such as al-sahih, al-hasan, al-muwaththaq, and al-da'if).[19]

Kinds of Hadith

In general, there are three basic kinds of hadith from the viewpoint of the Ahl al-Sunnah (al-Sahih, al-hasan, and al-da'if), and four basic kinds from the viewpoint of the Shi`ah (al-sahih, al-hasan, al-muwaththaq, and al-da'if). These are further classified both by the Shi`ah and the

Ahl al-Sunnah. Following are some of these general classifications:

1. Al-sahih: It is a hadith free of any kind of fault related by several continuous chains of veracious transmitters with more than one first recorder (ruwat 'adilun, dabitun ghayr shawadhdh).[20]

2. Al-hasan: It is a hadith which is well-known, and with reputable source (makhraj) and transmitters (ruwat).[21] It has been defined in these words in al-Jurjani's al-Ta'rifat:

   Al-hasan is a hadith whose transmitters are reputed for their veracity and trustworthiness; however, it does not reach the station of al-hadith al-sahih.[22]

3. Al-da'if: It is a hadith which does not have the qualities of either al-sahih or al-hasan.[23]

4. Al-musnad: It is a hadith whose chain of transmission goes right up to the Holy Prophet (S).

5. Al-muttasil (mawsul): It is a hadith whose all links in transmission are mentioned by the later transmitters.

6. Al-marfu': It is a hadith which reaches one of the Ma'sumun, regardless of continuity in the chain of transmitters.

7. Al-mawquf: It is a hadith which reaches the Sahabah, regardless of continuity in the chain of transmission.

8. Al-maqtu': It is a hadith narrated from one of the Tabi'un.

9. al-munqati': It is a hadith narrated from one of the Tabi'un.

10. Al-mursal: It is a hadith narrated by one of the prominent Tabi'un saying 'The Prophet of God said....' so on and so forth. There are many of this kind of narrations.

11. Al-mu'dal: It is a hadith whose two or more links in the chain of transmission are missing.

12. Al-mudallas (lit. forged): It is of two kinds: firstly, in text (matn); and secondly, in the chain of transmission (sanad).

13. Al-shadhdh: It is a tradition narrated by a veracious (thiqah) narrator that contradicts other traditions narrated by others.

14. Al-gharib: It is of three kinds: gharib al-'alfaz (with uncommon words), gharib al-matn (uncommon in content), and gharib al-sanad (uncommon with respect to the chain of transmission).

    a. Gharib al-'alfaz is a tradition containing problematic words.
    b. Gharib al-matn is a tradition narrated by a single narrator belonging to the earliest narrators.
    c. Gharib al-sanad is a tradition whose content is otherwise well-known.

15. Al-mu'an'an: It is a tradition in which all the links in the chain of transmission are connected by the preposition 'an.

16. Al-mu'allaq: It is a tradition in which the names of one or more transmitters are missing at the beginning end of the chain of transmitters.

17. Al-mufrad or al-wahid: It is a tradition narrated by only one narrator, or by narrators belonging to only one location.

18. Al-mudarraj: It is a tradition whose narrator includes his own words or that of another narrator in the text of the hadith.

19. Al-mashhur: It is a tradition which is well-known amongst the muhaddithun.

20. Al-musahhaf: It is a tradition whose text or name of transmitter (sanad) has been partially altered on account of resemblance with another similar text or name of transmitter.

21. Al-'ali: It is a hadith with a short chain of transmission.

22. Al-nazil: It is one opposite in character to the 'ali.

23. Al-musalsal: It is a hadith all of whose narrators in the chain of transmission up to the Ma'sum fulfil the conditions of trustworthiness at the time of narration from the viewpoint of sound character and speech.

24. Al-ma'ruf: It is a hadith whose meaning is well-known among narrators.

25. Al-munkar: It is the opposite of al-ma'ruf.

26. Al-mazid: It is a hadith which either in text or sanad has something additional in comparison with a similar hadith.

27. Al-nasikh: Some ahadith, like the Qur'an, abrogate other ahadith. Al-nasikh is a prophetic hadith which abrogates a former hukm of the Shari'ah.

28. Al-mansukh: is a hadith whose hukm is abrogated by al-nasikh.

29. Al-maqbul: It is a tradition which is accepted and practised by the Islamic 'ulama'.

30. Al-mushkil: It is a tradition containing difficult or problematic words or meanings.

31. Al-mushtarak: It is a tradition the name of one whose transmitters resembles that of a veracious and a non-veracious narrator. Study of such traditions calls for the study of `Ilm al-rijal.

32. Al-mu'talif: It is a hadith in whose chain of transmission the name of a person mentioned therein can be read variously, though it is written identically in all those cases.

33. al-mukhtalif: It is a hadith in whose chain of transmission the name of a person mentioned therein can be read variously, though it is written identically in all those cases.

34. Al-matruh: It is a tradition which contradicts definite evidence (dalil qat'i) and is also unamenable to explanation (ta'wil).

35. Al-matruk: It is a tradition in whose chain of transmission someone known to be a liar is mentioned.

36. Al-mu'awwal: It is a tradition which contradicts what is apparently true from the viewpoint of reason (aql), the Qur'an, and the Sunnah (naql).

37. Al-mubin: It is a tradition whose words in the text are used in their literal meaning.

38. Al-mujmal: It is the opposite of al-mubin.

39. Al-mu'allal: It is a tradition which gives the reason for a certain command (hukm) of the Shari'ah.

40. Al-mudtarib: It is a tradition that has been variously narrated either from the viewpoint of text or chain of transmission.

41. Al-muhmal: It is a tradition all of whose transmitters are not mentioned in books on `Ilm al-rijal.

42. Al-majhul: It is a tradition in which in spite of a continuous chain of transmission the sectarian affiliations of its transmitters are not known.

43. Al-mawdu': It is a tradition forged by its narrator.

44. Al-maqlub: It is a well-known tradition containing something counterfeit invented with the benign purpose of spiritual encouragement.

45. Al-hadith al-ma'thur: It is a tradition narrated by later generations from their ancestors.

46. Al-hadith al-qudsi: It consists of Divine Word, whose revelation unlike that of the Qur'an is not aimed as a miracle. (This kind of tradition has been discussed before).

47. Al-'aziz: It is one of the thirteen kinds of al-hadith al-sahih and al-hadith al-hasan.

48. Hadith za'id al-thiqah: It is another one of the various kinds of al-hadith al-hasan and al-hadith al-sahih. [24]

49. Al-muwaththaq: It is a hadith whose transmitters are reliable, although some of them may not have been Shi'ite.

50. Al-mutawatir: It is a tradition which has been transmitted from several narrators, so that it is impossible that it should have been forged. There are two kinds of this hadith: mutawatir in meaning, and mutawatir in words. However, if recurrence (tawatur) is in words, there may be chances of forgery.

Concluded; wal-hamdulillah.

Notes:

[1]. Ahmad Amin, Fajral 'Islam, p 250.

[2]. Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al rawi, "Introduction".

[3]. Ahmad Amin, Fajr al-Islam p 268.

[4]. Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al rawi, pp. 3, 14.

[5]. Ibn Khaldun, al-'Ibar, pp. 796-797.

[6]. This tradition is considered dubitable by the Shi`ah.

[7]. Mawali (sing. mawla), or clients, is a term that was used to indicate inferior social standing. The term was originally used for freed slaves by Arab Muslims and after Muslim conquests it was extended to a variety of non Arab peoples (Tr).

[8]. The description of the fifty two disciplines of ulum al-hadith mentioned here is a brief adoption from Ma'rifat 'ulum al-hadith by Hafiz al Nishaburi, Hakim Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Abd Allah.

[9]. Al-Suyuti, al-'Itqan p. 5.

[10]. Ibn al-Nadim, Kitab al-fihrist pp. 59-62.

[11]. Ibid., p.62.

[12]. Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, p.294.

[13]. Ibid., p.234.

[14]. Muhammad Muhammadi, al-'Adab al-farisi, pp.115,116; Lebanon.

[15]. Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al-rawi', p.13.

[16]. Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, pp.232, 233.

[17]. Al-Najashi, Ma'rifat ahwal al-rijal, pp.3-6.

[18]. Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al-rawi, p.102.

[19]. Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, Ta'sis al-Shi`ah, p.295.

[20]. Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al-rawi, p.22. See also Dehkhoda, Loghatnameh, vol. (ha'), p.399.

[21]. Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al-rawi, p.86.

[22]. Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, vol (ha') p.399.

[23]. Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al-rawi, p.105.

[24]. About the classification of hadith see Al-Suyuti, Tadrib al-rawi, pp.21 ff.; Hafiz al-Nishaburi, Kitab Ma'rifat 'ulum al-hadith, pp. 108-123; see also The Encyclopedia of Islam, pp.23-28, Dehkhuda, Loghatnameh, vol. (ha') pp. 395-399; al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, Nihayat al-dirayah, pp.4 ff.

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BACK NEXT

'Ashura - Misrepresentations and Distortions

Martyr Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from the Persian by 'Ali Quli Qara'i

This is a translation of a series of four sermons delivered by the author during the month of Muharram of 1389 H. (March 1969) on the topic of the meaning and significance of 'Ashura and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a) at Karbala. The first three sermons were published earlier in al-Tawhid, vol. 13, no.3, pp. 41-74, vol. 13, no.4, pp.57-71. The Persian appeared under the title Hamaseh-ye Husayni (Tehran: Intisharat-e Sadra, 2nd impression, 1362 H)

'Ashura - History and Popular Legend

First Sermon

Martyr Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from the Persian by 'Ali Quli Qara'i

Vol XIII No. 3 (Fall 1996)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

> All Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds and the Maker of all creation, and may Peace and benedictions be upon His servant and messenger, His beloved and elect, our master, our prophet, and our sire, Abul Qasim Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his pure, immaculate, and infallible Progeny.

I seek the refuge of Allah from the accursed Satan

> So for their breaking their compact We cursed them and made their hearts hard; they would pervert the words from their meanings. and they forgot a portion of what they were reminded of. (5:13)

Our discussion here concerns the misrepresentations (tahrifat) relating to the historic event of Karbala'. There have occurred various kinds of distortions in recounting the details of this great event. We shall carry out this discussion in four parts. The first will deal with the meaning of tahrif and its various existing forms, while pointing out that such misrepresentations have occurred in the [popular] accounts of the historic episode of 'Ashura'. The second part deals with the general factors responsible for tahrif, that is, the causes which commonly lead to the distortion of events and issues in the world. Why do men misrepresent and distort events, issues, and, occasionally, personalities? In particular, what factors have played a distorting role in the narrative of the episode of Karbala'? The third part consists of an explanation concerning the distortions that have crept into the narratives of this historic event. The fourth part deals with our duty, that of the scholars and the Muslim masses, in this regard.

The first part of this discussion is about the meaning of tahrif: What does tahrif mean? The Arabic word tahrif is derived from harrafa meaning, to slant, incline, alter, distort, misconstrue which means to make something depart from its original or proper course and position. In other words, tahrif is a kind of change and alteration, though it includes a sense not possessed by mere change and alteration. If you do something that prevents a sentence, message, verse, or passage from conveying the meaning that it ought to convey and gives it some other sense, you have subjected it to tahrif. For instance, you make a statement before someone. Elsewhere he quotes you, and later on you are told that so-and-so has reported that you have made such a statement. You find out that what you had said was very different from what he has reported. He has interpolated your statement, deleting words which conveyed your intent and adding others on his own account, with the result that your statements have been distorted and totally altered. Then you would say that this person has misrepresented your statements Especially, if someone tampers with an official document, he is said be guilty of causing tahrif in it These examples were meant to elucidate the meaning of the term tahrif, and it does not need any further explanation or clarification. Now we shall take up the different forms of tahrif.

There are various kinds of tahrif, the most important of which are tahrif in words and tahrif of meaning. Tahrif of wording occurs when the literal form of a statement is changed. For instance, when words and phrases are deleted or added to a statement or the sequence of sentences is altered in such a manner as to change its meaning. In this case tahrif occurs in the outward form and wording of a statement

Tahrif of meaning occurs when one does not change the words, which remain in their original form, but the statement is interpreted in a manner that is contrary to the intent of its speaker. It is interpreted in such a manner as to express one's own intent, not that of its author.

The Noble Qur'an employs the term tahrif specifically in relation to the Jews. A study of history shows that they have been the champions of tahrif throughout the course of history. I don't know what kind of race this is that has such an amazing penchant for misrepresenting facts! Accordingly they always take up professions in which they can distort and misrepresent events. From what I have heard, the world's well-known news agencies, which are perpetually quoted by the radios and newspapers, are exclusively in the hands of the Jews. Why? Because they can report the events as they wish. How amazing is the Qur'an's statement about them! This characteristic of the Jews, the tendency for tahrif, is considered a racial trait by the Qur'an. In one of the verses of the Sura al-baqarah, the Qur'an declares:

> Are you then eager that they (i.e. the Jews) should believe in you, while a party of them had heard Allah's word, and then consciously misinterpreted it, after they had understood it, and did that knowingly? (2:75) [1]

This means, 'O Muslims, have you pinned your hopes on their telling you the truth? They are

the same people who would go along with Moses, and hear God's pronouncements. But by the time they returned to their people's midst to recount what they had heard, they would twist it out of shape.' The tahrif that they would carry out was not for the reason that they did not understand and so altered what they reported. No! They are an intelligent people and they understand matters the issues very well. But despite the fact that they understand what they have heard they would recount them in a distorted manner for the people. This is what tahrif is, that is, distorting and twisting things out of their original shape-and they carried out tahrif even in Divine scriptures!

In this context, in most of the cases the Qur'an uses the very term tahrif or expresses the matter in some other manner. However, the exegetes have pointed out that the Qur'anic reference to tahrif in this context includes tahrif in wording as well as in meaning. That is, some of the instances of corruption that have occurred [in the scriptures at the hands of the Jews] relating to the wording and some of them relate to the meanings and interpretation. As this involves a digression from my main topic, I do not wish to discuss this matter any further.

There is a story which would not out of place here. One of the scholars used to recount that once during the day of his youth a maddah [2] from Tehran was visiting Mashhad. During the day he would stand in the Gawharshad Mosque or in the courtyard of the shrine and recite verses and eulogies. Among things that he recited was the famous ghazal ascribed to Hafiz:

> O heart! Be slave of the world's King and rejoice!
> Forever dwell in the shelter of God's grace!
> Embrace the tomb of Rida, the Eighth Imam,
> From the heart's depth, and cling to the threshold of his shrine (bargah).

This gentleman, in order to have some fun with him, had approached him and said to him, "Why do you recite this verse wrongly? It should be read like this, which means, as soon as you reach the shrine you must throw yourself down in the manner a bundle of straw (barekah) is rolled off the back of an ass. Thereafter, whenever the poor maddah recited these verses, he would say bar-e kah instead of bargah and at the same time throw himself down on the ground! This is what tahrif does!

Here I must point out that tahrif also differs in respect of the subject involved. There is a time when tahrif occurs in an ordinary speech, as when two persons misrepresent each other's words. But there are times when tahrif takes place in a matter of great significance to society, such as when there is misrepresentation of eminent personalities. There are personalities whose words and deeds represent a sacred authority for the people and whose character and conduct is a model for mankind. For instance, if someone were to ascribe to Imam 'Ali (a) a statement that he did not make or something that he had not meant to say, that is very dangerous. The same is true if a characteristic or trait is ascribed to the Prophet (S) or one of

the Imams ('a) when in fact they had some other qualities, or when tahrif occurs in a great historic event which serves as a moral and religious authority and as a momentous document from the viewpoint of society's norms and is a criterion in matters of morality and education. It is a matter of incalculable ,importance and entails a crucial danger when tahrif-whether in respect of words or meaning-occurs in subjects which are not of the ordinary kind.

There is a time when someone tampers with a verse of Hafiz or makes interpolations in an animal fable. This is not so important, though, of course one should not tamper with books of literary value.

One professor wrote a paper about Mush-o gorbeh ("The Cat and the Mouse"), which is a book of considerable literary value. He had found that it had been victim of so many interpolations, changes of wording, addition and deletion of verses, as to be beyond reckoning. There, he remarks that in his opinion no nation in the whole world is so untrustworthy as the Iranians who have made such extensive unauthorized interpolations in works belonging to their literary heritage. The same is true of Rumi's Mathnavi. God knows how many verses have been appended to the Mathnawi! For instance, there is a fine couplet in the original versions of the Mathnawi about the power of love. It says:

> Love sweetens matters bitter,
> Love turns bronzes into gold.

That is a sensible thing to say: love is something that turns even the bitter aspects of life into ones that are sweet and pleasant. Love, like an elixir, transforms the bronze of man's being into gold. Then others came and added verses to this one, without bothering for pertinence or aptness in respect of analogy. For instance, they said: 'Love turns a serpent into an ant,' or that 'love turns the roof into a wall,' or 'love turns a musk-melon into a water-melon'! These analogies have no relation at all to the theme. Of course such a thing should not happen, but these interpolations do not harm a society's life and felicity and do not cause deviance in its course. But when tahrif occurs in things that relate to the people's morality and religion, it is dangerous, and this danger is incalculable when it occurs in documents and matters that constitute the foundations of human life.

The event of Karbala' is, inevitably, an event possessing great social meaning for us, and it has a direct impact on our morality and character.

It is an event that prompts our people, without anyone compelling them, to devote millions of man-hours to listening to the related episodes and to spend millions of tumans for this purpose. This event must be retold exactly as it occurred and without the least amount of interpolation. For if the smallest amount of interpolation takes place at our hands in this event, that would distort it, and instead of benefiting from it we would definitely suffer harm.

Now my point is that we have introduced thousands of distortions in retelling the narrative of Ashura, both in its outward form, that is, in respect of the very episodes and issues relating to the major events and the minor details, as well as in respect of their interpretation and meaning. Most regrettably, this event has been distorted both in its form and content.

At times a distorted version has at least some resemblance to the original. But there are times when distortion is so thorough that the corrupted version has not the least resemblance to the original: the matter is not only distorted, but it is inverted and turned into its antithesis. Again I must say with utmost regret that the misrepresentations that have been carried out by us have all been in the direction of degrading and distorting the event and making it ineffective and inert in our lives. In this regard both the orators and scholars of the ummah as well as the people have been guilty, and, God willing, we will elucidate all these matters.

Here I will cite examples of some of the distortions that have occurred in the outer form of this event and the concoctions that have grown around it. The topic is so vast as to be beyond expression. It is so vast that should we attempt to collect all the unfounded narratives it will perhaps take several volumes of 500 pages each.

Marhum Hajji Mirza Husayn Nuri, may God elevate his station, was the teacher of such figures as marhum Hajj Shaykh 'Abbas Qummi, marhum Haji Shaykh 'Ali Akbar Nehawandi and marhum Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Baqir Birjandi. He was a very extraordinary man and a muhaddith (scholar of hadith) with an unparalleled command of his field and a prodigious memory. He was a man of fine spirituality with a highly fervent and passionate faith. Although some of the books that he wrote were not worthy of his station [3] -and for this reason he earned the reproach of his contemporary scholars - but in general his books are good, especially the one that he wrote on the topic of the minbar (pulpit), entitled Lu'lu' wa marjan. Though a small book, it is an excellent work in which he speaks about the duties of those who deliver sermons and recount for the mourners the narrative of Karbala' from the minbar. The entire book consists of two parts.

One part is about the sincerity of intention and purpose, as one of the requirement for a speaker, orator, sermonizer, and rawdeh-khwan [4] is that the motive of someone who relates the narrative of 'Ashura' should not be greed or attainment of pecuniary gain. How well he has discussed this topic!

The second requirement is honesty and truthfulness. Here, he elaborates on the topic of false and true narration, discussing various forms of lying in such a thorough-going manner that I do not think there is any other book which deals with Iying and its various form in the way that it does, and perhaps there is no such other book in the whole world. In it he exhibits a marvelous learning and scholarship.

In this book, that great man mentions several examples of falsehoods that have become

prevalent in narratives of the historic event of Karbala'. Those which I will mention are all or mostly the same things that the marhum haji Nuri has lamented about. This great man even says explicitly, "Today too we must mourn Husayn, but there are tragedies which have befallen Husayn in our era which did not occur in the past, and they are all these falsehoods that are said regarding the event of Karbala' and which no one opposes! One must shed tears for the sufferings of Husayn ibn 'Ali, not for the sake of the swords and spears that struck his noble body on that day, but on account of these falsehoods." In the book's introduction he writes that an eminent scholar from India had written him a letter complaining about the false narratives that are recited in India, and asking him to do something or to write a book to stop the fictitious narratives that were current there. Then he remarks: "This Indian scholar has imagined that the rawdakhwans tell false stories when they go to India. He does not know that the stream is polluted from its very source. The centre of false rawdahs are Karbala', Najaf and Iran, that is, the very centres of Shi'ism."

Now as a sample, I will cite some instances of tahrif, of which a few relate to the events that occurred before 'Ashura', some that occurred during the Imam's way, some during the days of his final halt at Karbala' in the month of Muharram. I will also mention some of them that relate to the days of his family's captivity and some about the Imams who lived after the event of Karbala'. However, most of them will relate to the day of 'Ashura' itself. Now I will give two examples of each of them.

It is essential to mention a point at first, and that is that the people are responsible in all these cases. You folks who attend the majalis [5] sessions imagine that you have no responsibility in this regard, and think that it is only the speakers who are responsible. The people have two major responsibilities. The first is that of nahy 'anil-munkar (forbidding what is wrong) which is obligatory for all. When they find out and know-and most of the time they do know!-that a narrative is untrue, they should not sit in that gathering. It is forbidden to sit in such gatherings and one must protest against them. Secondly, they must try to get rid of the eagerness and expectation which the hosts as well as the audience attending the majalis have for the majlis to become fervid, that there should be impassioned mourning and the majlis should get feverish with cries of the mourners. The poor speaker knows that if he were to say only things that are true and authentic, the majlis would not get into a frenzy and the same people will not invite him again. Hence he is compelled to add something.

The people should get this expectation out of their heads and refrain from encouraging the kind of fictitious narratives which kill the soul of Karbala but work up the mourners into a frenzy. The people should hear the true narrative so that their understanding and level of thinking is elevated. They should know that if a sentence creates a tremor in one's souls and attunes it with the spirit of Husayn ibn 'Ali and, as a result, one small tear were to come out of one's eyes, it is really a precious station. But tears drawn by the scenes of mere butchery, even if a deluge, are worthless.

They say that in one of the towns there was an eminent scholar who had some concern for the

faith and who protested against these falsehoods which are uttered from the minbar. He would say, "What are these abominable things that they say on the minbar?" One wa'iz said to him, "If we don't say these things we will have to shut down our shops right away!" That gentleman replied, "These are mendacities and one must not utter them." By chance, some days later this gentleman himself happened to host a majlis in his mosque and he invited the same waiz; to make the rawdah. But before his taking his seat on the minbar the host said to the wa'iz, "I want to hold a model majlis in which nothing is said except the true narrative. Make it a point not to recount any episode except out of the reliable books. You shouldn't touch any of that abominable stuff!' The wai'z replied, "The majlis is hosted by you. Your will, will be done." On the first night, the gentleman himself sat there facing the qiblah in the prayer niche, close to the minbar. The wai'z; began his sermon, and when the time came to recite the tragic narrative, as he had committed himself to recite nothing but the true accounts, the majlis remained unmoved and frozen as he spoke on. The gentleman was now upset. He was the host of the majlis and he thought about what the people would say behind his back. The women would certainly say, "To be sure, the Aqa's intent was not sincere, and so the majlis was a fiasco. Had his intentions been good and were his motives sincere the majlis would have been rocked with the howls and-groans of mourners crying their eyes out. He saw that it would all end up in a loss of face. What should he do? Quietly, he signaled to the wai'z, "Get a bit of that abominable stuff!"

The expectation of the people that the majlis should go wild with mourning is itself a source of falsehoods. Accordingly, most of the fabrications that have occurred have been for the purpose of drawing tears, nothing else.

I have heard this story repeatedly, and you too must have heard it. Hajji Nuri also mentions it. They say that one day 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, was delivering a sermon from the minbar. Suddenly Imam Husayn ('a) said, 'I am thirsty, Imam 'Ali said, 'Let someone bring water for my son.' The first person to get up was a little boy, Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas ('a). He went out and got a jar of water from his mother. When he returned carrying the jar on his head, his head was drenched in water as it spilled from the sides. This story is narrated in its elaborate detail. Then, when the Commander of the Faithful's eyes fell on this scene, tears flowed from his eyes. He was asked why he was crying. He told them that the ordeals that this young son of his would face had come to his mind. You know the rest of the story, which serves the purpose of a point of departure for switching to the tragic scenes of Karbala'. Hajji Nuri has an excellent discussion at this point. He writes, "Now that you say that 'Ali was delivering a sermon from the minbar, you should know that 'Ali spoke from the minbar and delivered sermons only during the period of his caliphate. Hence, the episode must have occurred in Kufah. At that time Imam Husayn was a man of about thirty-three years." Then he remarks, "Is it at all a sensible thing for a man of thirty-three years to say all of a sudden, in a formal gathering while his father is delivering a sermon, 'I am thirsty!' 'I want water!" If an ordinary man does such a thing, it would be considered ill-mannered of him. Moreover, Hadrat Abu al-Fadl, too, was not a child at that time but a young man of at least fifteen years." You see how they have fabricated the story! Is

such a story worthy of Imam Husayn? Aside from its fictitious character, what value does it have? Does it elevate the station of Imam Husayn or does it detract from it? It is definitely detracting to the dignity of the Imam, as it ascribes a false act to the Imam and detracts from is station by bringing the Imam down to the level of a most ill-mannered person who, at a time when his father - a man like 'Ali - is delivering a sermon, feels thirsty and instead of waiting for the session to be over, suddenly interrupts his father's sermon to ask for water.'

Another example of such fabrications is the story of a messenger who has brought a letter for Abu 'Abd Allah ('a) and he awaits a reply. The Imam tells him to come after three days and collect the reply. After three days on inquiring he is told that the Imam was departing the same day. He says to himself, "Now that he is setting out, let us go and watch the majesty and glamour of the prince of the Hijaz He goes and there he sees the Imam, together with other Hashimis among men, seated on splendid chairs. Then the camels are brought bearing the litters draped in silk and brocade. Then the ladies emerge and with much honor and ceremony they are escorted into these litters. This description continues in this vein until they make the digression to switch to the scene of the eleventh day of Muharram, to compare the glamour and honor of this day with the sorry state of the womenfolk on the latter day. Haji Nuri calls such descriptions into question. He says, "It is history which says that when Imam Husayn left Madinah he recited this Qur'anic verse:

> He left it in the state of fear and concern. (28:21)

That is, he likened his own departure to that of Moses, son of 'Imran, when he fled for the fear of the Pharaoh.

> He said, "It might be that my Lord will guide me to the right path."(28:22)

The Imam had departed with a most simple caravan. Does the greatness of Imam Husayn lie in his sitting, for instance, on golden chairs? Or does the greatness of his family and womenfolk lie in their using litters draped in silk and brocade, or their possessing fine horses and camels and a retinue of lackeys and servants?!

Another example of tahrif in the accounts of 'Ashura' is the famous story of Layla, the mother of Hadrat 'Ali' Akbar, a story that is not supported even by a single work of history. Of course, Ali' Akbar had a mother whose name was Layla, but not a single historical work has stated that Layla was present at Karbala'. But you see how many pathetic tales there are about Layla and Ali' Akbar, including the story of Layla's arrival at 'Ali Akbar's side at the time of his martyrdom. I have heard this story even in Qum, in a majlis that had been held on behalf of Ayatullah Burujerdi, though he himself was not attending. In this tale, as 'Ali Akbar leaves for the battlefield the Imam says to Layla, "I have heard from my grandfather that God answers a mother's prayer for the sake of her child. Go into a solitary tent, unfurl your locks and pray for your son. It may be that God will bring our son safe back to us."

First of all, there was no Layla in Karbala' to have done that. Secondly, this was not Husayn's logic and way of thinking. Husayn's logic on the day of 'Ashara' was the logic of self-sacrifice. All historians have written that whenever anyone asked the Imam for the leave to go to battlefield, the Imam would at first try to restrain him with some excuse or another that he could think of, excepting the case of 'Ali' Akbar about whom they write:

> Thereat he asked his father's permission to go forth to fight, and he gave him the permission. [6]

That is, as soon as 'Ali Akbar asked for permission, the Imam told him to depart Nevertheless, there is no dearth of verses which depict the episode in quite a different light, including this one:

> Rise, O father, let us leave this wilderness,
> Let us go now to Layla's tent.

Another case relating to the same story, which is also very amazing, is the one that I heard in Tehran. It was in the house of one of the eminent scholars of this city where one of the speakers narrated the story of Layla. It was something which I had never heard in my life. According to his narrative, after Layla went into the tent, she opened the locks of her hair and vowed that if God were to bring 'Ali Akbar back safely to her and should he not be killed in Karbala' she would sow basil (rayhan) all along the way from Karbala' to Madinah, a distance of 300 parasangs. Having said this, he began to sing out this couplet:

> I have made a vow, were they to return
> I will sow basil all the way to Taft!

This Arabic couplet caused me greater surprise as to where it came from. On investigating I found that the Taft mentioned in it is not Karbala' but a place related to the famous love legend of Layla and Majnun. Taft was the place where the legendary Layla live. This couplet was composed by Majnun al-'Amiri and sung for the love of Layla, and here this man was reciting it while attributing it to Layla, the mother of 'Ali Akbar, conjuring a fictitious connection with Karbala'. Just imagine, were a Christian or a Jew, or for that matter some person with no religious affiliation, were to be there and hear these things, will he not say what a nonsensical hagiography these people have? He would not know that this tale has been fabricated by that man, but he would say, na'udubillah, how senseless were the women saints of this people to vow sowing basil from Karbala' to Madinah!

A worse fabrication is the one mentioned by Hajji Nuri. As you know, in the heat of the battle on the day of 'Ashura', the Imam offered his prayers hurriedly in the form of salat al-khawf [7] and there was no respite even to offer full prayers. In fact, two of the companions of the Imam came to stand in front of him to shield the Imam (against the arrows) so that he

may offer two rak'ahs of the salat al-khawf. The two of them fell from the injuries inflicted under the shower of the arrows. The enemy would not even give respite for offering prayers. Nevertheless, they have concocted a story that the Imam called for a wedding ceremony on this day, declaring, 'It is my wish to see one of my daughter wedded to Qasim.' Obviously, one cannot take one's wishes to one's grave.

By God, see what kind of things they have attributed to a man like Husayn ibn 'Ali, things the like of which we sometimes hear from persons of a very mediocre character, who express a wish to see the wedding of their son or daughter in their life. And this is said to have occurred at a time when there was hardly any respite even for offering prayers. They say that the Hadrat said, 'I want to wed my daughter to my nephew here and now, even if it is just an appearance of a wedding.' One of the things that was an inseparable part of our traditional ta'ziyahs was the wedding of Qasim, the boy bridegroom. Such an episode is not mentioned in any reliable book of history. According to Hajji Nuri, Mulla Husayn Kashifi was the first man to write this story in a book named Rawdat al-shuhada' and it is totally fictitious. The case here is similar to the one about which the poet says:

> Many are the appendages that they have clapped upon it,
> You will hardly recognize it when you see it again.

Were the Sayyid al-Shuhada' to come and observe these things (and, of course, he does from the world of the spirit, but were he come into the world of appearance) he will find that we have carved out for him companions that he never had. For instance, in the book Muhriq al-qulub - whose author was, incidentally, an eminent scholar and jurist, but who had no knowledge of these matters - that one of the companions to appear out of nowhere on the day of 'Ashura' was Hashim Mirqal, who came bearing an eighteen cubits long spear in his hand. (After all someone had claimed that Sinan ibn Anas - who according to some reports severed the head of Imam Husayn - had a spear sixty cubits long. He was told that a spear could not be sixty cubits. He replied that God had sent it for him from the heaven!) Muhriq al-qulub writes that Hashim ibn 'Utbah Mirqal appeared with a spear sixteen cubits long, whereas this Hashim ibn 'Utbah was a companion of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali and had been killed twenty years earlier.

We have attributed several companions to Husayn ibn 'Ali that he did not have, such as the Za'far the Jinn. Similarly, there are some names among the enemies that did not exist. It is mentioned in the book Asrar al-shahadah that 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army in Karbala' consisted of one million and sixty thousand men. One may ask, where did they come from? Were they all Kufans? Is such a thing possible?

It is also written in that book that Imam Husayn himself personally killed three hundred thousand men in combat. The bomb that destroyed Hiroshima killed sixty thousand people. I calculated that if we assume that a swordsman kills one man every second, it would take

eighty-three hours and twenty minutes to massacre a force of three hundred thousand. Later, when they saw that this number of those felled by the Imam did not fit with a day's duration, they said that the day of 'Ashura was also seventy-two hours long!

Similar things are said concerning Hadrat Abu al-Fadl, that he killed twenty-five thousand men. I calculated that if one man were killed per second, it would require six days and fifty and odd hours to kill that many. Therefore, we have to admit what Hajji Nuri, this great man, says, that if one wanted to mourn the Imam today and narrate the ordeals of Abu 'Abd Allah, may Peace be upon him, one should lament over these new tragedies, over these falsehoods, which have been incorporated in the accounts of his martyrdom.

Another example relates to the day of 'Arba'in. At the time of 'Arba'in everyone relates the narrative that leads the people to imagine that the captives of the Imam's family arrived at Karbala' on the day of 'Arba'in, and that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin met Jabir (ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari) there. However, excepting the Luhuf, whose author is Sayyid ibn Tawus and who has denied it in his other books, or at least has not confirmed it, such an episode is not mentioned in any other book, nor does it seem very reasonable to believe it. But is it possible to expunge these stories, which are repeated every year, from the people's minds? Jabir was the first visitor to Imam Husayn grave, and the significance of 'Arba'in is also nothing except that it is the occasion for the ziyarah of Imam Husayn's tomb. It is not for the renewal of mourning for the Ahl al-Bayt, nor on account of their arrival in Karbala'. Basically, the road to Madinah from Syria is not through Karbala' and the two ways diverge from Syria itself.

What is more painful is that, incidentally, there are few events in history that are as rich as the event of Karbala' from the viewpoint of reliable sources. Formerly I used to imagine that the basic reason for the proliferation of legends in this field is that the actual events are not known to anybody. But when I studied I found that no event of remote past-for instance of a period thirteen or fourteen centuries ago-has as reliable an history as the event of Karbala'. Reliable Muslim historians have reported the pertinent episodes with trustworthy chains of transmission from the first/seventh and the second/eighth centuries, and their narrations are close and corroborate one another.

There were certain reasons which were responsible for the preservation of these details in history. One of them, which caused the details of this event to be preserved and its objectives to remain clear, were the many speeches (khutbahs) that were delivered during its course. In those days, an oration was what communiques and press releases are in our era. In the same way that official communiques issued during wartime are the best historical source, so were orations in these days. Accordingly, there were many of them before the event of Karbala', during, and after it. Individuals from among the Prophet's household made orations in Kufah, Damascus and other places. Basically, their aim by delivering these orations was to inform the people about the episodes as well as to declare the truth of the matter and to spell out the goals. This was itself one of the reason for the events to be reported.

There were also many exchanges, questions and answers, in the event of Karbala' and these are recorded in history. They too disclose for us the nature of the occurrences.

Rajaz poetry [8] was also recited a lot during Karbala', and, in particular Abu 'Abd Allah ('a) himself recited much rajaz, and these rajaz verses also reveal the character of the confrontation.

There were many letters that were exchanged before and after the episode of Karbala', letters that were exchanged between the Imam and the people of Kufah, between the Imam and the people of Basrah, the letters that the Imam wrote earlier to Mu'awiyah (which indicate that the Imam was preparing for an uprising after Mu'awiyah's death), the letters that the enemies wrote to one another, Yazid to Ibn Ziyad, Ibn Ziyad to Yazid, lbn Ziyad to 'Umar ibn Sa'd, 'Umar ibn Sa'd to Ibn Ziyad, whose texts are all recorded in the history of Islam.

Hence the developments relating to Karbala' are quite clear and all of them are throughout a matter of great honor and pride. But we have disfigured this shining historic event to such an extent and have committed such a monstrous treachery towards Imam Husayn ('a) that if he were to come and see, he will say, 'You have changed the entire face of the event. I am not the Imam Husayn that you have sketched out in your own imagination. The Qasim ibn Hasan that you have painted in your fancy is not my nephew. The 'Ali Akbar that you have faked in your imagination is not my aware and intelligent son. The companions that you have carved out are not my companions."

We have fabricated a Qasim whose only desire is to become a bridegroom and whose uncle's wish, too, is to have him wedded. Contrast this one with the historical Qasim. Reliable histories report that on the night of 'Ashura' the Imam ('a) gathered his companions in a tent whose location, as described by the phrase 'inda qurbil-ma', [9] was the place where water used to be kept, or near it. There he delivered that very well-known sermon of the night preceding 'Ashura'. I do not want to mention its details here, but, to put it briefly, in this sermon the Imam told them that every one of them was free to depart and leave him to confront the enemy alone. The Imam did not want anybody to stay just for considerations of courtesy or to remain out of compulsion, or even to think that they were obliged to do so by virtue of the allegiance (bay'ah) they had given him. Hence he tells them, "You are all free, my companions, members of my family, my sons, and my nephews-everyone-to leave without being liable to anything. They [i.e. the enemy's forces] have nothing against anyone except me. The night is dark. Take advantage of the darkness of the night and depart. They will definitely not stop you." At first, he expresses his appreciation for them and tell them, I am most pleased with you. I do not know of any companions better than mine, and no better relatives than the members of my family."

But all of them tell him, in unison, that such a thing was impossible. What answer will they give to the Prophet on the Day of Resurrection? What will happen to loyalty, to humanity, to

love and attachment? Their ardent responses and their words said on that occasion melt a heart of stone and are most moving. One of them says, "Is one life worth enough to be sacrificed for someone like you? I wish that I were brought to life seventy times to die seventy time for your sake." Another says, "I would lay down a thousand lives for your sake if I had them." Another says, "If I were to sacrifice my life for you and my body were burnt to ashes and the ashes were cast to wind, and were this done a hundred times, I would still love to die for your sake." The first to speak was his brother Abu al-Fadl, and then the Imam changed the subject and told them about the events of the next day, informing them that they all would be killed. All of them receive it as a great good news.

Now this young man - to whom we are so unjust and think that all that he cherished in his heart was the wish to become a bridegroom - puts a question to the Imam. In reality he expresses his real wish. When a group of elderly men gather in an assembly, a boy of thirteen does not sit in their midst, but reverently stays behind them. It appears that this youth was sitting behind the Imam's elderly companions and was keen to hear what others said. When the Imam told them that they would all be killed on the next day, this child wondered if he too would be one of them. He thought to himself, After all I am only a boy. Perhaps the Imam means that only the elderly would be martyred. I am just a minor." Therefore, he turned to the Imam and asked him:

> Will I be among those who will be killed?

Look! See what his wish and aspiration are! The Imam says to him, "Qasim, first let me ask you a question. I will reply after you have answered me." I think the Imam purposefully put this question. With this question he wanted to show to posterity that they shouldn't think that this youth gave his life without awareness and understanding, that they should not imagine that what he cherished was a wish to become bridegroom, that they should not conjure up a wedding for him and be guilty of the crime of distorting his fine character. So the Imam said, "First, I will ask you a question":

That is, "My child, my nephew, tell me, how do you regard death and what do you think about getting killed?' He promptly answered.

> "It is sweater to me than honey!"

That is, "I haven't a desire that should be dearer and sweater to me!" This is an astounding scene. These are the things that have made this a great and historic event - and we should keep it alive! For there will not be another Husayn, nor another Qasim ibn Hasan. These are the things that make us give so much value to this event, and if after fourteen centuries we build such a husayniyyah as this [10] in their memory and in their name, we have done nothing. Or else the wish to become bridegroom does not oblige one to put in one's time and money, to build husayniyyahs or to deliver sermons. But they were the very essence of

humanity, the very concrete instances of the Divine purpose as stated in the verse:

> Surely I will make a vicegerent in the earth (2:30)

and they stood above the angels.

After getting this answer, the Imam said to him, "My nephew, you too will be killed. But your death will be different from that of others

> and (it will be) after you have faced a great ordeal.

Accordingly, when Qasim, after much insistence, received the permission to leave for the battlefield, being very young, there was no armour that was fit for his years, nor a helmet nor shoes, nor arms. It is written that he wore a turban ('ammamah) and this description is given of his appearance:

> He appeared like a piece of the moon. [11]

This boy was so handsome that when the enemies saw him they described him as a piece of the moon:

> 'Where does the wind carry this petal of red rose?'
> said whoever that saw you on your fleeting mount.

The narrator says: "I saw that the strap of one of his sandals was untied, and I do not forget that it was his left foot" This shows that he was not wearing boots. They write that the Imam stood near the tents as he held his horse's reins. Evidently he was alert and ready. At once he heard a cry. It was Qasim: "Ya 'ammah!" (O Uncle!). They write that the Imam flew on the horse like a hunting falcon. As he arrived by the side of this youth, about two hundred men had surrounded this child. They fled as the Imam attacked, and one of the enemy's men who had dismounted to sever Qasim's head was himself trampled under the hoofs of the horses of his fleeing comrades. The one who is said to have been trampled to death under the hoofs of the horses was one of the enemy's men, not Hadrat Qasim. In any case, when the Imam arrived at Qasims side, there was so much dust and confusion that nobody could see what was happening; When the dust settled down, they saw the Imam sitting at Qasim's side with his head in his arms. They heard the Imam utter this sentence:

> My nephew! By God, it is very hard on your uncle that you should call him and he should not be able to respond, or that he should respond without being able to do anything for you! [12]

It was at this moment that a cry came from this youth and his spirit departed towards its

Creator.

O God, may our ultimate end be one that is of felicity. Make us aware of the realities of Islam! Remove from us our ignorance and nescience with Your grace and munificence. Give all of us the ability to act with sincere intentions. Fulfill our legitimate needs and forgive all our dead and pardon them.

Continued in part 2 ...

Notes from part 1:

[1] J. M Rodwell in his translation of the Qur'an (London: Everyman's Library, p 345) makes in a footnote the following remark under this verse:

> "This is one of the passages which shows great familiarity with the habit of the Jews on the part of Muhammad." [Tr.]

[2] The professional maddah, himself somewhat of a rawdeh khwan, though mostly without a clerics training, is someone who recites elegies, verses and even delivers a rawdah in the majalis, the gatherings that are held for the sake of ceremonial mourning, before the rawdeh e khawn takes to the minbar.[Tr.]

[3] This is a reference to his controversial book Fasl al-Khitab in which he, contrary to the general belief of Shi'i Imami scholars through the course of history, raised doubts concerning the occurrence of tahrif (mainly the occurrence of deletions) in the Qur'an.[Tr.]

[4] The rawdeh-khawn, often a cleric is someone who delivers the rawdah, consisting of narratives relating in particular to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, his family and companions, and in general to the ordeals of Ahlal Bayt, the Prophet's family. Wa'iz, Dhakir, Minbari, etc. are other names for the professional rawdeh-khwan.

[5] The verse pertains to the story of Moses at the time of his flight from Egypt: So he departed therefrom, fearful and vigilant; he said, 'My Lord, deliver me from the wrongdoers.' And when he turned his face towards Midian, he said, 'It may be that my Lord will guide me on the right way.' Quran, 28:21-22

[6] Ibn Tawus, al-Luhuf, p. 47

[7] The Shari'ah stipulates certain modifications in the obligatory salat, the daily ritual prayers, when offered in conditions of war and danger of the enemy's attack. The salat thus offered is referred to as salat al-khawf; (see the Quran, 4:101). [Tr.]

[8] It was a tradition among the Arab warriors to recite verses during combat and encounter with the enemy on the battlefield. Rajaz is the form of poetry composed of such purposes and occasions. [Tr.]

[9] Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44 p. 392, A'lam al-Wara, p. 234, al-Shaykh al-Mufid, Kitab al-Irshad, p. 231, al-Muqarrim, Maqtal al-Husayn, p. 257. Apparently, there was a tent where water-skins used to be kept and stored from the first days of the caravan's halt at Karbala'.

[10] This is a reference to the Husayniyyeh-ye Irshad, in Tehran. Husayniyyah is a building which is at times also used as a mosque but is built mainly with the purpose of holding mourning ceremonies during the months of Muharram and Safar as well as other occasions relating to anniversaries of the martyrdom of the figures of the Ahl al-Bayt.

[11] Ibn Shahr Ashub, al-Manaqib, iii, p. 106, see also A'lam al-Wara, p.242; al-Luhuf, 48; Bihar al-Anwar, vol 45 p. 35, al-Mufid's Kitab al Irshad, p. 239, al-Muqarrim's Maqtal al-Husayn, p. 331; and al-Tabari's Ta'rikh, vi, p. 256.

[12] Ibn Shahr Ashub, al-Manaqib, iv, p. 107, A'lam al-Wara, p. 243; al-Luhuf, 38; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 45 p. 35, al-Mufid's Kitab al Irshad, p. 239, al-Muqarrim's Maqtal al-Husayn, p. 332; and al-Tabari's Ta'rikh, vi, p. 257.

'Ashura - History and Popular Legend

Second Sermon

Martyr Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from the Persian by 'Ali Quli Qara'i

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In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

> All Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds and the Maker of all creation, and may Peace and benedictions be upon His servant and messenger, His beloved and elect, our master, our prophet, and our sire, Abu al-Qasim Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his pure, immaculate, and infallible Progeny.

I seek the refuge of Allah from the accursed Satan:

> So for their breaking their compact We cursed them and made their hearts hard; they would pervert the words from their meanings, and they forgot a portion of what they were reminded of. (5:13)

We said that the event of 'Ashura' has been subject to tahrif and it has occurred both in its outward form as well as its inner content. A consequence of these distortions has been that this great historic document and this great educative source has become ineffectual or less potent, in our lives, leaving, at times, even an opposite effect. All of us have the duty to purge it of the distortions that have polluted this sacred document. Tonight we will discuss the general factors responsible for tahrif. Thereafter our discussion will focus on tahrif in the content and significance of this event.

The Factors of Tahrif:

These factors are of two kinds, one of which are of a general nature. That is, there are in general certain factors that lead to the corruption of histories and these are not limited to the event of 'Ashura' alone. For instance, the enemy's motives are themselves a factor that distort an event. In order to achieve their purposes, the enemies bring about alterations in historical texts or misinterpret them. There are many examples of it which I do not wish to mention here. All that I would say is that this kind of tahrif did play a role in distorting the facts of Karbala', and the enemies did take resort in misrepresenting the uprising of Imam Husayn. As usually happens, the enemies accuse sacred movements of causing conflict and division and of disrupting social harmony and peace. The Umayyad regime also made much effort to give such a hue to the Husayni uprising.

Such propaganda began from the very first day. When Muslim arrived in Kufah, Yazid, while sending an order appointing Ibn Ziyad to the governership of Kufah, wrote: "Muslim, son of 'Aqil, has gone to Kufah and his aim is to disrupt peace and to create social discord and disunity in the Muslim community. Go and suppress him." When Muslim was captured and brought to the dar al-imarah, the governor's residency, Ibn Ziyad said to Muslim: "Son of 'Aqil! What was it that brought you to this city? The people here lived in satisfaction and peace. You came and disrupted their peace, causing disunity and conflict amongst Muslims." Muslim answered in a manly manner and said: "Firstly, I did not come to this city on my own account. It was the people of this city who invited us. They wrote a great number of letters, which are in our possession. In those letters they wrote that your father, Ziyad, who ruled this city for years, had killed its virtuous men and imposed its scoundrels over the virtuous, subjecting them to various forms of tyranny and injustice. They appealed to us to help them establish justice. We have come to establish justice!"

The Umayyad regime did wage much propaganda of this kind, but their misrepresentations did not affect the history of Islam. You will not find a single competent historian in the world who might have said that Husayn ibn 'Ali, naudhubillah, made an unlawful uprising, that he rose to cause conflict and disunity among the people. No. The enemy could not bring about any misrepresentation in [the history of] the event of Karbala'. Most regrettably, whatever tahrif has occurred in the event of Karbala' has been at the hands of the friends.

The Second Factor:

The second factor is the human tendency towards myth-making and for turning facts into legends. This tendency has been at work in all the world's historical traditions. There is a tendency in men for hero worship which induces the people to fabricate myths and legends about national and religious heroes. [13] The best evidence of it are the legends that the people have invented around the figures of some geniuses such as Ibn Sina and Shaykh Baha'i. Ibn Sina, undoubtedly, was a genius and was gifted with extraordinary physical and intellectual powers. But these very gifts have led the people to weave out legends about him. For instance, it is said that once Ibn Sina saw a man from a distance of one parasang and

remarked that the man was eating a bread made with oil. They asked him how could he know that the man was eating a bread and that it was made with oil. He replied that he saw flies circling the bread, which had made him conclude that there was oil in the bread. Obviously, this is a legend. Someone who can see flies from the distance of one parasang will see a bread made with oil much sooner than he would see flies!

Or it is said that once during the time that Ibn Sina was studying at Isfahan he complained that when he gets up in the middle of the night to study, he was disturbed by the noise of the hammering of the coppersmiths of Kashan. They went and made a test. One night they told the coppersmiths of Kashan not to use their hammers. That night, said Ibn Sina, he had slept peacefully and was undisturbed in his study. Obviously this is a legend.

Many such legends have been made about Shaykh Bahi'i as well. Such things are not confined to the event of 'Ashura. However, let the people say what they would about Ibn Sina. What harm does it do? None! But in respect of individuals who are guides of mankind and whose words and deeds and whose stands and uprisings serve as a model and authority, there should not be any tahrif whatsoever in their statements, in their personality, and history.

How many legends have been fabricated by us Shi'is about Amir al Mu'minin 'Ali, many Peace be upon him! There is no doubt that 'Ali ('a) was an extraordinary man. No one has doubts about 'Ali's courage which was superior to that of any ordinary human being. 'Ali did not encounter any contestant in battle without felling him to the ground. But does that satisfy the myth makers? Never! For instance, there is the legend about 'Ali's encounter with Marhab in the battle of Khaybar with all the curious details about the physique of Marhab. The historians have also written that 'Ali's sword cut him into two from the middle (I don't know whether the two halves were perfectly equal!). But here they found the opportunity to weave out fables which are harmful for the faith. It is said that God commanded Gabriel to go immediately to the earth lest 'Ali's sword when it comes down on Marhab should cut the earth into two halves, reaching right down to the Cow and the Fish. Gabriel was told to shield the blow with his wings. Gabriel went and when 'Ali struck the blow with his sword, it slashed Marhab into two halves which had they been put in a balance would have turned out to be exactly equal. However, one of Gabriel's wings suffered injury and he could not ascend to the heaven for forty days. When at last he arrived in heaven, God asked him as to where he had been all these days. He replied, "O Lord! I was on the earth. You had given me an assignment to go there." He was asked why he had taken so much time to return. Gabriel said, "O God, the blow of 'Ali's sword wounded my wings and I was busy bandaging and healing them all these forty days!" According to another legend 'Ali's sword flew so swiftly and slickly through Marhab's forehead cutting all the way to the saddle that when 'Ali pulled away his sword Marhab himself did not know what had happened (he thought the blow had gone amiss). He jeered at 'Ali, "Was that all of your swordsmanship?!" 'Ali' said to him, "Just move yourself a bit and see." As soon as Marhab made a movement, one half of his body fell on one side of the horse and the other on the other side!

Hajji Nuri, this great man, in his book Lu'lu wa marjan, while condemning the practice of fabricating of such legends, writes about legends that some people have put into circulation concerning the valour of Hadrat Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas. According to one of them, in the Battle of Siffin (in which, basically, it is not known whether he had participated, and even if he did he must have been a boy of fifteen years) he threw a man into the air, then another, and so on up to eighty men, and by the time the last one was thrown up the first one had not yet reached the ground. Then when the first one came down, he cut him into two halves, then the second and so on to the last man!

A part of the interpolations in the narratives of the event of Karbala have resulted from the myth-making tendency. The Europeans assert that one finds many exaggerations in accounts pertaining to the history of the East, and there is some truth in what they say. Mulla Darbandi writes in his book Asrar al-shahadah that the cavalry of the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd consisted of six hundred thousand horsemen and twenty million infantrymen - in all a force of one million and six hundred thousand plus all the people of Kufah! Now how large was Kufah? Kufah was a recently founded city and not more than thirty-five years old, as it was built during the time of 'Umar ibn Khattab. It was built at 'Umar's orders as a military outpost for Muslim warriors near the borders of Iran. It is not certain whether the entire population of Kufah during that time was even a hundred thousand. That a force of one million and six hundred thousand could have been assembled on that day and that Husayn ibn 'Ali' should have killed three hundred thousand of them is not at all reasonable. Such figures cast a shadow on the whole event.

It is said that someone once made exaggerated claims about the largeness of the city of Herat in former days. He said, 'Herat was a very big city at one time.' 'How big? he was asked. He said, 'At one time there were in Herat twenty thousand one-eyed cooks named Ahmad selling head and totters stew. Now imagine, how many men there must be in a city, and how many named Ahmad, and how many one-eyed Ahmads, to have twenty-one thousand one-eyed Ahmads selling head and totters stew!

This myth-making tendency has always been very active; but we must not leave a sacred document to the mercy of myth-makers.

> There is amongst us, the Ahl al-Bayt, in every generation reformers who purge the faith of the perversions of the extremists, of the false beliefs of the falsifiers, and of the misinterpretations of the ignorant. [14]

We have a duty here. Now let anyone say anything he likes about Herat. But is it right that such legends as these should find way into the history of the event of Ashura', an event concerning which our duty is to keep it alive and revive its memory every year?

The Third Factor

The third factor is of a particular nature. The two factors that we have discussed above, that is, the hostile ends of the enemies and the human tendency for conjuring legends and myths, apply to all histories of the world, but there is also a factor which is specific to the event of Ashura' that has led to fabrication of stories.

The leaders of the faith, from the time of the Noble Messenger and the Pure Imams, have commanded in clear and emphatic terms that the memory of Husayn ibn 'Ali must be kept alive and that his martyrdom and ordeals should be commemorated every year. Why? What is the reason underlying this Islamic ordinance? Why is there so much encouragement for and emphasis on visiting the shrine of Husayn ibn 'Ali? We should reflect over these questions. Some might say that it is for the sake of condoling with Hadrat Zahra' and offering her consolation! But is it not ridiculous to imagine that Hadrat Zahra' should still need consolation after fourteen hundred years, whereas, in accordance with the explicit statements of Imam Husayn and according to our creed, since his martyrdom Imam Husayn and Hadrat Zahra have been together in heaven? What a thing to say! Is it correct to think of Hadrat Zahra as a little child that goes on weeping, even after fourteen centuries, and whom we have to go and console? Such kind of beliefs are destructive for religion. Imam Husayn ('a) established the practical ideology of Islam and he is the practical model for Islamic movements. They (that is the Prophet and Imams) wanted Imam Husayn's ideology to be kept alive. They wanted Husayn should reappear every year with those sweet, sublime and heroic summons of his and declare"

> Don't you see that what is right and true is not acted upon, and what is wrong and false is not forbidden? [In such conditions] the man of faith should long to meet his true Lord! [15]

They wanted the words:

> Death is better than a life saddled with indignity, [16]

to be kept alive forever, and so also the words:

> To me death is nothing but felicity, and life with oppressors is nothing but disgrace, [17]

They wanted such other saying of Imam Husayn to be kept alive:

> The children of Adam carry the mark of death like necklaces that adorn the neck of damsels! [18]

> Far from us is disgrace and indignity! [19]

They wanted to keep alive the memory of such scenes as that of Imam Husayn's confronting a force of thirty thousand men, in a state when he and his family are faced with a great ordeal, and declaring in a manly manner - and the world has never seen such a manly personage!

> Indeed, that baseborn son of a baseborn father has left me only two alternatives to choose from: the sword or disgrace. And far from us is disgrace! It is disdainful to God, His Messenger and the faithful that we should yield to anything of that kind, and those born of chaste mothers and high-minded fathers and possessing a lofty sense of honour disdain that submission to vile men should be preferred to honourable death! [20]

They wanted to keep alive the formative school of Imam Husayn so that the rays of the Husayni spirit may breathe life into this community. Its objective is quite clear.

Do not allow the event of 'Ashura' to be consigned to oblivion! Your life, your humanity, and your dignity depend on this event!

You can keep Islam alive only by its means! That is why they have encouraged us to keep alive the tradition of mourning Imam Husayn, and very rightly! The institution of mourning Husayn ibn 'Ali has a correct philosophy underlying it, a philosophy which is also extremely sublime. It is fitting that we should do all that we can to endeavour for the sake of this cause, provided we understand its purpose and goal. Unfortunately some people have not understood it. Without making the people understand the philosophy of Imam Husayn's uprising and without making them understand the station of Imam Husayn, they imagine that if they just came and sat in mourning assemblies and shed tears, without knowledge and understanding, it would atone their sins.

Marhum Hajji Nuri mentions a point in the book, Lu'lu' wa marjan. That point is the belief of some people that the reward (thawab) for mourning Imam Husayn is so great that it is justifiable to employ any means whatsoever for this end. Nowadays a group which subscribes to the views of Machiavilli in political thought says that ends justify the means. If the end is a good one, it does not matter what means are used to achieve it. Now these people also say that we have a sacred and exalted goal, which is mourning Imam Husayn and it does not matter what means are used for this end. As the end is a sacred one, it does not matter what the means are: Is it correct to perform ta'ziyahs - even ta'ziyahs which are vulgar - for this purpose? They ask, 'Do they make the people cry? If they do, there is so problem with such ta'ziyahs.' So also there is no problem if we blow trumpets, beat drums, commit sinful acts, make men dress as women, conjure a wedding for Qasim, or fabricate and forge episodes. Such things do not matter in the tradition of mourning Imam Husayn, which is something exclusive. Here lying is forgiven, forgery and fabrication are forgivable, making pictures, and dressing men as women is pardonable. Here any kind of sinful conduct is forgivable as the

end is most sacred! As a consequence of such thinking, some persons have resorted to such tahrif and misrepresentation that are stunning.

About ten or fifteen years ago when I was on a visit to Isfahan, I met a great man, marhum Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafabadi, may God elevate his station. I recounted to him a rawdah that I had heard recently somewhere. It was something which I had never heard until that time. Incidentally, this man who had delivered that rawdah, an opium addict, had made the people weep profusely with that rawdah of his. In it he recounted the story of an old woman during the reign of Mutawakkil (the 'Abbasid caliph who persecuted the Shi'ah). The woman had set out with the purpose of making a pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam Husayn, which was forbidden at that time and they would cut off the hands of the pilgrims. He went on with the narrative until the point when the old woman is taken and thrown into the river. In that state she cries out for help, calling out, "O Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas!" As she is about to drown a horseman appears and tells her to catch hold of his stirrup. The woman takes hold of the stirrups but she says, "Why don't you give me your hand?' The horseman says, "I haven't any hands!" At this point the people wept a lot.

Marhum Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Hasan recounted for me the history of this legend. In a place near the bazaar, in the near abouts of Madrasah Sadr, there used to be held a majlis which was one of the major majalis of Isfahan and which even the marhum Hajj Mulla Isma'il Khwaju'i used to attend. One day there had occurred there an incident. (It had taken place earlier and he had heard its account from reliable persons.) It involved a well-known wa'iz; who himself had recounted it in these words: "One day mine was the last turn to speak from the minbar. Other speakers had come and each one of them had exerted his skills to make the people weep. Everyone that came would try to surpass his predecessor and having delivered his rawdah would descend from the minbar to sit among the audience and watch the art of the succeeding rawdeh-khwan. This continued until the time of noon. I saw that everyone had tried his prowess and together they had drawn out all the tears that the people could shed. What should I do? I thought for a while, and then and there I made up this story. When my turn came, I went up and related the story, leaving all of them behind. In the afternoon, the same day, while attending another majlis in the Char-suq locality, I saw that the one who took to the minbar before me related this same story. Gradually it came to be written in books and appeared in print."

The false and wrong notion that the tradition of mourning Imam Husayn is an exception to all norms, that it is justified to use any means to make the people weep, has been a major factor leading to fabrication of legends and tahrif.

Marhum Hajji Nuri, that saintly man and teacher of marhum Hajj Shaykh 'Abbas Qummi, who as confessed by Hajj Shaykh 'Abbas himself as well as others was superior to his pupils, was an extraordinarily learned and pious man. In his book he makes the point that if it is a correct notion that the end justifies the means, then one may also justify the following line of reasoning. One of the Islamic precepts is that bringing delight to the heart of a believer and to

do something to make him happy is a greatly commendable act. Such being the case, according to this reasoning, it is justifiable to do backbiting in his presence, as he loves listening to backbiting. And should someone say that it is sinful to do so, the answer will be," No! The purpose is a sacred one and the backbiting is being done to make a believer pleased and happy!"

Marhum Hajji Nuri gives another example. A man embraces a non-mahram woman, which is an unlawful act. We ask him why did you do that? He replies, "I have done it for a believer's delight." The same reasoning can be applied to such unlawful acts as adultery, drinking wine, and sodomy. Isn't this an absurd reasoning? Wouldn't such a notion destroy the Shari'ah? By God, to think that it is permissible to use any kind of means for making people cry in mourning Imam Husayn is a notion that contradicts everything that Imam Husayn stands for. Imam Husayn was martyred to uplift Islam, as we confess while reciting his ziyarah:

> I bear witness that you established the prayer, gave zakat commanded what is right and forbade what is wrong, and did such jihad in the way of God as ought to be done. [21]

Imam Husayn was killed in order to revive Islamic traditions, Islamic laws and regulations, not in order to create an excuse for the violation of Islamic norms. Na'udhubillah, we have changed Imam Husayn into a destroyer of Islam: the Imam Husayn that we have conjured in our imagination is a destroyer of Islam.

In his book Hajji Nuri mentions a story that was related to him by one of the students in Najaf, who originally came from Yazd. "One day," he said, "in my youth I made a journey on foot to Khorasan, going by the road that passes through the desert (kawr). In one of the villages of Nayshabur I went to a mosque, as I did not have any place to stay. The imam of the mosque came and led the prayers. Afterwards he went on the minbar to make a rawdah I was amazed to see the mosque attendant bring a pile of stones which he handed over to the imam. When the rawdah started, he ordered the lamps to be put out. When the lamps had been put out, he pelted the stones at the audience and there arose cries from the people. When the lamps were lighted, I saw bleeding heads. Their eyes were tearful as they walked out of the mosque. I approached the imam and asked him why he had done such a thing. He said, 'I have tested these people. There is no rawdah in the world that will make them weep. As weeping for the sake of Imam Husayn has a great reward and thawab, I have found that the only way to make them cry is to throw stones on their heads. This is how I make them weep.' " He believed that the end justifies the means. The end was to mourn Imam Husayn though it should involve emptying a pile of stones on the people's heads.

Accordingly, this is a particular factor which is specific to this historic event and it has led to much fabrication and tahrif.

When one studies history one finds what they have done to this event. By God, Hajji Nuri is right when he says that if we were to weep for Imam Husayn today, we should mourn for him on account of these falsehoods, fabrications and tahrif!

There is a well-known book called Rawdat al-shuhada'. whose author was Mulla Husayn Kashifi. According to Hajji Nuri, he was the first to write in his book the stories of Za'far the Jinn and the one about Qasim's wedding. I have read this book. I used to imagine that it contained only one or two of such cases. But afterwards when I read it I saw that the matter was very much different. This book, which is in Persian, was compiled about five-hundred years ago. Mulla Husayn Kashifi was a scholar and learned man. He has authored several books including the Anwar suhayli. His biographical accounts do not indicate whether he was a Shi'i or a Sunni. Basically he was a Chameleon: among the Shi'ah he would pose as an outright Shi'i, while amongst the Sunnis he would pass as a Hanafi. He was a native of Sabzawar, a Shi'i centre whose people were staunch Shi'is. In Sabzawar he would act as an out and out Shi'i, and at times when he would go to Herat ('Abd al-Rahman Jami was the husband of his sister or sister-in-law) he would give sermons for the Sunnis in the Sunni style. But in Sabzawar he narrated the tragedies of Karbala'. His death occurred around 910/1504, that is, either at the end of the 9th or the beginning of the 10th century. This was the first book, compiled about five hundred years ago, to be written as an elegiac narrative (marthiyah). Earlier the people used to refer to the primary sources. Shaykh Mufid, may God be pleased with him, wrote the Irshad and how sound is his narration! If we were to refer to the Irshad of Shaykh Mufid we would not stand in need of any other source. Tabari, among Sunni authors, has also written about it. Ya'qubi, Ibn 'Asakir and Khwarazmi have also written. I don't know what this unjust man has done! When I read this book I saw that even the names are spurious. He mentions names among Imam Husayn's companions that never existed. He mentions names of the enemy's men which are also spurious. He has turned the factual accounts of the event into fables.

As this was the first book to be written in Persian, the orators in mourning assemblies, who were mostly illiterate and could not use the Arabic texts, would take this book and read from it in the mourning sessions. That is why the gatherings that are held nowadays to mourn Imam Husayn are called rawdeh-khwani. Rawdeh-khwani was not in vogue during the time of Imam Sadiq or Imam Hasan 'Askari, nor it was prevalent during the times of Sayyid Murtada [d 436/1044] or even Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi [d. 672/1273]. Rawdeh-khwani came into vogue since the last five hundred years and it came to be called as such. Rawdeh-khwani meant reading from the book Rawdat al-shuhada', a pack of lies. From the time that this book fell into the hands of the people, no one has bothered to study the actual history of Imam Husayn.

Then, about sixty or seventy years ago, there appeared another man, the marhum Mulla Darbandi. He took all the contents of the Rawdat al-shahuda' and compiled them together with other material, collecting it all in a book called Asrar al-shahadah. The contents of this book make one lament for the fate of Islam.

Hajji Nuri writes, "We used to attend the lectures of Hajj Shaykh 'Abd al-Husayn Tehrani (who was a very saintly man) and benefited from his teaching. A sayyid from Hillah, who was a rawdeh-khwan, came to meet him and he showed him a book written about the events of Imam Husayn's martyrdom (maqtal, plural: maqatil) to see whether its contents were reliable. This book did not have any beginning or end. Only at one place in it was mentioned the name of a certain mulla of Jabl al-'Amil who was among the pupils of the author of the Ma'alim al-usul. Marhum Hajj Shaykh 'Abd al-Husayn took the book to examine it.

First he studied the biographical accounts of that scholar and found that such a book had not been attributed to him. Then he read the book itself and found it to be full of falsehoods. He said to that sayyid, 'This book is a pack of lies. Don't circulate this book and don't quote anything from it, for it is unlawful to do so. Basically this book has not been written by that scholar and its contents are spurious.' " Hajji Nuri says that the same book fell into the hands of the author of Asrar al-shahadah and he copied all its contents into his book, from the beginning to the end!"

Hajji Nuri relates another episode, which is rather touching. Once a man came to author of the Maqami' [22] and said to him, "Last night I saw a horrible dream." "What was it?" he asked him. He said, "I saw that I am biting away flesh from the body of Imam Husayn." The scholar trembled on hearing these words. He lowered his head and thought for a while. Then he said, "Perhaps you are a marthiyeh-khwan?". "Yes, I am," he replied. He said, "Hereafter, either abandon marthiyeh-khwani altogether or draw your material from reliable books. You are tearing away the flesh Imam Husayn, with these lies of yours. It was God's grace that He showed this to you in a dream."

If one studies the history of 'Ashura' one will find that it is the most vivid and well-documented of histories with plenty of sources. The marhum Akhund Khurasani used to say, "Those who are ever after 'new' rawdahs should go and read the true accounts, for no one has ever heard them" One should study the addresses of Imam Husayn ('a) delivered in Makkah - in the Hijaz as a whole - at Karbala', during his journey, as well as the sermons addressed to his companions, the questions and answers that took place between him and others, the letters that were exchanged between him and other people, the letters that were exchanged between the enemies themselves, in addition to the accounts of those (from among the friends as well the enemies) who were present on the occasion of 'Ashura'. There were three or four persons from among Imam Husayn's companions who survived, including a slave named 'Uqbah ibn Sam'an, who had accompanied the Imam from Makkah and lived to write the accounts pertaining to the Imam's troops. He was captured on the day of 'Ashura' but was released when he told them that he was a slave. Humayd ibn Muslim was another chronicler who accompanied the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd. Of those present on the occasion was Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) himself who has recounted all the events. There is no blind spot in the history of Imam Husayn ('a).

Hajji Nuri refers to a spurious story that relates to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a). According to it when there remained no companion with Hadrat Abu 'Abd Allah ('a), the Hadrat went into the tent of Imam Zayn al- 'Abidin ('a) to bid him good-bye. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) asked him, "Father! How did things come about between you and these people? (that is, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin was unaware of what was happening until that time). The Imam said to him, "Son, this matter has ultimately led to a battle." 'What happened to Habib ibn Mazahir?, asked Imam Zayn al-'Abidin. "He was killed," replied the Imam. "How about Zuhayr ibn Qayn?" "He was also killed," replied the Imam. "What happened to Burayr ibn Hudayr?" "He was killed," said Imam Husayn ('a). Imam Zayn al-'Abidin continued naming each of his father's companions one after another and the Imam's reply was the same Then he asked concerning the men of Banu Hashim. "What happened to Qasim ibn Hasan?" What happened to my brother 'Ali Akbar?" "What happened to my uncle Abu al-Fadl The answer was the same: "He has been killed." This is a fabrication and a lie. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, na'udhubillah, was not so sick and unconscious as not to know what was going on. Historians have written that even in that state of illness he rose from his bed and said to Zaynab, "Aunt, bring me my staff and give me a sword." In any case, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) was one of those who were present on the scene and related the accounts of events.

Truly, we should be penitent for these crimes and treacheries that we are guilty of in respect of Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn ('a), his companions, comrades and members of his family, and for effacing all their achievements. He should do penance and then make effort to derive benefit from this most educative source.

Is there any inadequacy in the life of 'Abbas ibn 'Ali as recounted in the reliable maqatil (accounts of martyrdom)? The single point that there was no danger to his own life is enough to be a matter of pride for him. Imam Husayn had also told him, "They are only after me, and if they kill me, they will not have anything again anyone else." At Kufah, when Shimr ibn Dhi al-Jawshan was departing for Karbala', one of those who were present said to Ibn Ziyad that some of his relatives on the mother's side were with Husayn ibn 'Ali. He requested Ibn Ziyad to write a letter granting them amnesty, and Ibn Ziyad wrote it. Shimr belonged to a clan that had remote ties with the tribe of Umm al-Banin (the mother of Abu al-Fadl). Shimr personally brought this letter of amnesty on the night following the ninth day of Muharram. This wretch approached the camp of Husayn ibn 'Ali and shouted, "Where are my nephews!" (ayna banu ukhtina?!).[23] Abu al-Fadl, along with his full brothers, was sitting with Hadrat Abu 'Abd Allah ('a). He remained silent and did not reply, until the Imam said to him, "Answer him, though he be an evil man (ajibuhu in kana fasiqa). At the Imam's leave, he answered Shimr, saying, "What do you want?" (Ma taqul?). Shimr said, "I have come with some good news for you. I have brought a letter of amnesty for you from the emir, 'Ubayd Allah. You are now free, and you will be safe if you leave now." Abu al-Fadl said to him, "May God damn you and your emir, as well as the letter that you bring. Do you think we will abandon our Imam and brother for the sake of our own safety?"

On the night of 'Ashura', the first person to declare his loyalty towards Abu 'Abd Allah was his brother Abu al-Fadl. Aside from the foolish exaggerations that are often made, that which is confirmed by history is that Abu al-Fadl was a very wise person, valiant and courageous, tall and most handsome. He had been nicknamed 'The Moon of the Hashimis.'[24] These things are true. To be sure, he had inherited Ali's courage. The story is also true regarding his mother, that Ali' had asked 'Aqil, his brother, to propose a woman born of a heroic descent (waladatha al-fuhulah) [25] who might give birth to son who would be a warrior and man of valour (li-talidani farisan shuja'ah).[26] 'Aqil had suggested Umm al-Banin. So much of it is true. 'Ali's wish was fulfilled in Abu al-Fadl.

According to one of two reports, on the day of 'Ashura' Abu al-Fadl came to the Imam and said, "Dear brother, now give me the permission. This breast of mine is suffocated and I can bear it no more. I want to sacrifice my life for your sake." I don't know the reason why Imam responded to Hadrat Abu al-Fadl's request in the manner that he did. Abu 'Abd Allah himself knows better. He said, "Brother, now that you want to leave, try to get some water for these children." Hadrat Abu al-Fadl had already come to receive the nickname Saqqa (water carrier), as earlier, on one or two occasions, at nights he had been able to pass through the enemy's ranks to fetch water for the children in Abu 'Abd Allah's camp. It was not the case that they had not drunk any water for three days and nights. Access to water had been closed for three days and nights, but during this time they had been able to get some water on one or two occasions, including the night of 'Ashura', when they had taken bath and washed their bodies. Abu al-Fadl consented. Now note this majestic scene! What greatness! What valour! What a spirit of understanding and self-sacrifice! A lone warrior, alone by himself, advances against a host. The number of men who guarded the river bank was four thousand. He descends along the river bank and leads his horse into the water (all historians have written this). First, he fills the waterskin that he has brought and lays it on his shoulder. He is thirsty. The air is hot and has been fighting. But as he sits on the back of his horse and the horse stands in water reaching up to its belly, he lowers his hands into water, takes water into them and raises them somewhat towards his sacred lips.

Those who were watching from a distance report that he hesitated for a while. Then they saw that he threw the water back and came out of the river without drinking any. No one knew why Abu Al-Fadl did not drink water there. But when he came out he recited rajaz verses which were addressed to himself. Now from these verses they understood why he had not drunk water:

> O soul of Abu al-Fadl!
> My wish is that you live not after Husayn!
> Will you have a drink of cold water,
> While there stands Husayn, thirsty, near the tents,
> And about to drink the cup of death!?
> Such is not the way of my faith,

Nor that of one who abides in conviction and truth! [27]

What would become of manliness? Of honour? Of caring love? And of sharing in the hardship of one's dear ones? Isn't Husayn your Imam, and you his follower?

While Husayn is about to drink the cup of death,
Will you have a drink of cold water?

Never! My faith does not permit me to do that! My loyalty does not allow me to do such a thing! Abu al-Fadl changed his route while returning and now he came through the palm groves. Earlier, he had come by the direct way, but he knew that he now carried a precious trust with him. So he changed his route and all his concern now was to get the water safely to the camp, for it was possible that a single arrow may pierce the waterskin and fail his task of bringing the water to its destination. In the mean while they heard that Abu al-Fadl had changed his rajaz. It appeared that something had happened. Now he cried out:

By God!
Even if you sever my right arm,
I will persist in defending my faith,
And the Imam, who is the true one, for certain,
the Prophet's grandson, pure and trustworthy! [28]

That is, by God even if you cut my right arm I will not flinch from defending Husayn. Not much time passed when his rajaz changed again:

O my soul, fear not the faithless,
And receive the good news of Almighty's mercy,
In the company of the Prophet, the Master and the Elect,
Though, insolently, they should slash my left arm! [29]

These rajaz verses signaled that his left arm too had been severed. They write that with characteristic dexterity he somehow turned the water-skin and bent himself over it. I will not say what happened thereafter as it is most heart rending.

It is a custom to recount the account of the ordeals of this great human being on the night of Tasu'ah (9th Muharram). Let me add that Umm al-Banin, the mother of Hadrat Abu al-Fadl was alive at the time of the event of Karbala', though she was in Madinah at the time. She was given the news that all her four sons were martyred at Karbala'. This saintly woman would go to the Baqi' cemetery and mourn over her sons. They write that her elegies were so full of pathos that they brought tears to everyone who heard them, even Marwan ibn Hakam, who was the staunchest of the enemies of the Prophet's family. Sometimes she would remember all her sons and, at times, especially Abu al-Fadl, the eldest of them, who was senior most of the

brothers, both in respect of age as well as in respect of spiritual and bodily merits. I remember one of her two elegies and I will recite them for you. These are the elegiac verses that this grieved mother recited in mourning for her sons (in general, the Arabs recite elegiac verses in a very touching style):

> You, who have seen 'Abbas make repeated forays against the base hosts,
> And following him were the Lion's sons, each a mighty lion!
> I have been told, my son's head was struck when his arms were cut,
> Alas for my Lion's cub! Did a club fall on his head?
> O 'Abbas! None would have dared to approach it,
> Were your sword in your hand! [30]

That is, 'O observant eye, tell me, you who have been in Karbala' and watched its scenes and observed the moment when Abu al-Fadl, my son of a lion, with my other lion's cubs following him, attacked that cowardly crowd - tell me is it true what I have been told? They say that when they had cut my son's arms an iron club fell on my dear one's head. Is that true?' Then she says, "Abu al-Fadl! My dear! I know that if you had arms there wasn't a man in the whole world to have the guts to face you! They had the temerity to do that because your arms had been severed from your body.

Continued in part 3 ...

Notes to part 2:

[13] During the nights of the 'id of Ghadir, Dr. Shari'ati delivered an excellent lecture on this general human tendency for hero-worship and making of myths and legends, turning historic figures into legendary heroes with extraordinary and superhuman characteristics.

[14] Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, "kitab fadl al-'ilm", p. 32; al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-darajat, p.10

[15] Bihar al-anwar, vol. 44, p. 381; Tuhaf al-'uqul, p. 176; al-Luhuf, 33; al-Khwarazmi's Maqtal al-Husayn, ii, p. 5.

[16] Ibn Shahr Ashub, al-Manaqib, iv, p. 110; al-Luhuf, p. 50, Bihar al-anwar, vol. 45, p. 50; al-Irbili, Kashf al-ghummah, ii, p. 32.

[17] Bihar al-anwar, vol. 44, p. 381; Tuhaf al-'uqul, p. 176; al-Luhuf, 33.

[18] Bihar al-anwar, vol. 44, p. 366; al-Luhuf, p. 25.

[19] Al-Luhuf, p. 41; Khwarazmi's Maqtal al-Husayn, ii, p. 7; Ibn 'Asakir, Ta'rikh al-Sham, iv, p. 333; al-Muqarrim's Maqtal al-Husayn, p. 287; al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-'uqul, p. 176; Shaykh 'Abbas

al-Qummi, Nafs al-mahmum, p. 149, Mulhaqat Ihqaq al-haqq, xi, pp. 624-625.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Mafatih al-janan, the ziyarah of Imam Husayn ('a) for the nights of 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha.

[22] Marhum Aqa Muhammad Ali was the son of marhum Wahid Behbahani and both of them were great men. Marhum Aqa Muhammad Ali migrated to Kirmanshah where he wielded great influence.

[23] al-Muqarrim's Maqtal al Husayn, p. 252, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 391, al-Luhuf, p. 37

[24] al-Muqarrim's al-Abbas, p. 81; Ibn Shahr Ashub, al-Manaqib, iv, p. 108

[25] al-Muqarrim's al-Abbas, p. 69

[26] Ibsar al-ayn fi ansar al-Husayn alayh al-salam, p. 26

[27] Yanabi al-mawaddah, ii, p. 165; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 45, p. 41

[28] Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 45, p. 40

[29] Ibid.

[30] Muntaha al-amal, i, p. 386.

'Ashura - Misrepresentations and Distortions

Third Sermon

Martyr Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from the Persian by 'Ali Quli Qara'i

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In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds and the Maker of all creation, and may Peace and benedictions be upon His servant and messenger, His beloved and elect, our master, our prophet, and our sire, Abu al-Qasim Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his pure, immaculate, and infallible Progeny.

I seek the refuge of Allah from the accursed Satan:

> So for their breaking their compact We cursed them and made their hearts hard; they would pervert the words from their meanings, and they forgot a portion of what they were reminded of. (5:13)

We stated earlier that the history of an event of such greatness as Karbala' has been subject to distortion at our hands both in respect of its external details as well as its meaning. By distortion of outward form we mean the accretions that we have piled up on the corpus of its history which have obscured its bright and luminous visage and disfigured its beautiful countenance. We cited some instances in this regard.

Distortions of Meaning:

Regrettably this historic event has also been distorted in respect of its meaning, and corruption of meaning is much more dangerous than corruption of external detail. That which

has made this great event ineffectual for us is the corruption of meaning, not that of external detail. That is, the evil effect of distortions in meaning is greater than those pertaining to external details.

What is meant by distortion of meaning? Without adding a single word or deleting a single word, it is possible to misinterpret a statement in such a manner that it gives a meaning exactly contrary to its real meaning. I will give just one small example to illustrate this point. At the time that the early Muslims were building the Mosque of Madinah, 'Ammar Yasir was working hard, making an extraordinary amount of sincere effort. Among the reports that are of a definite authenticity is the one that the Noble Messenger (S) said to him at the time:

'Ammar, you will be killed by the rebellious faction.[1]

The term 'rebellious faction' (al-fi'at al-baghiyah) is Qur'anic, and it occurs in a verse which states that if two faction of Muslims fight one another and one of them is rebellious, one must take a stand against the rebellious faction and join on the side of the other faction so that the matters are set right.

> If two factions of believers fight, make peace between them, but if one of them rebels against the other, fight the one which is rebellious until it returns to God's command. (49:9)

The statement, made by the Noble Messenger concerning 'Ammar, gave him great prestige. Accordingly, during the Battle of Siffin, when 'Ammar fought on the side of Imam 'Ali ('a), Ammar's presence in 'Ali's troops was considered a strong point in 'Ali's favour. There were people with a weak faith who, until 'Ammar had not been killed, were not convinced that it was right for them to fight on Ali's side and lawful to kill Mu'awiyah and his soldiers.

But on the day that 'Ammar was killed at the hands of Mu'awiyah's soldiers, suddenly a cry rose from all sides that the Prophet's prophesy had come true. The best evidence of the unrighteousness of Mu'awiyah and his companions was that they were the killers of 'Ammar and the Prophet had informed years ago through his statement that 'Ammar will be killed by a rebellious faction.[2]

On this day it became quite clear that the Mu'awiyah's troops represented the rebellious faction, that is, one which was unjust and unrighteous, and that justice lay on the side of 'Ali's army. Hence in accordance with the express injunction of the Qur'an one had to join the battle on 'Ali's side and against Mu'awiyah's army. This incident demoralized Mu'awiyah's troops. Mu'awiyah, who always tried to make a headway by resorting to cunning and subterfuge, resorted to a misinterpretation. It was not possible to deny that the Prophet had made such a statement concerning 'Ammar, because perhaps there were at least five hundred persons who could bear witness that they had heard this statement from the Prophet himself or from

someone who had heard it from the Prophet. Accordingly, it was not possible to deny the fact of the prophesy concerning 'Ammar. The Syrians protested to Mu'awiyah, for it were they who had killed 'Ammar and the Prophet had said that he would be killed by a rebellious faction. Mu'awiyah told them, "You are mistaken. It is true that the Prophet said 'Ammar will be killed by a rebellious faction and army. But it were not we who killed 'Ammar." They said, "He was killed by our warriors." "No," he said, " 'Ammar was killed by 'Ali who brought him here and provided the causes of his death."

'Amr ibn 'As had two sons. One of them was a worldly person like himself. The other one was a youth who was relatively a man of faith and he did not agree with his father's ways. His name was 'Abd Allah. 'Abd Allah was present in a gathering where this sophistry was put into effect. 'Abd Allah said, "What a false argument that it was 'Ali who has killed 'Ammar, as he was among his troops. If that is so, then it was the Prophet who killed Hamzah, the Doyen of the Martyrs, as Hamzah was killed due to his presence in the Prophet's troops." This enraged Mu'awiyah and he said to 'Amr ibn As, "Why don't you check this ill-mannered son of yours!" This is what is called distortion of meaning.

How is the meaning of events and facts distorted?

Historical events and facts have on the one hand certain causes behind them, and, on the other, they are inspired by certain goals and motives. Misrepresentation of a historical event lies in ascribing to it causes and motives other than what they have actually been, or in attributing to it goals and motives other than what they in fact were. For instance, you visit someone who has recently returned from a pilgrimage to Makkah. The purpose you have in mind is that it is mustahabb to visit a hajji and so you go to see him. Someone makes a remark about your motives for the visit, describing them as an intention to propose your son's marriage with his daughter under the pretext of visiting a hajji returning from Makkah. This is how he misrepresents your motive and purpose. This is what misrepresentation means.

The historic event of Karbala' had certain causes and motives behind it, as well as certain sublime goals. We Muslims and followers of Husayn ibn 'Ali have misrepresented this event in the same way as Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan distorted the meaning of the Prophet's statement concerning 'Ammar.

That is, Imam Husayn ('a) had certain goals and motives for staging his uprising and we have ascribed to him some other motives and goals.

The Character of a Sacred Movement:

Abu 'Abd Allah ('a) made an uprising that was of unusual greatness and sanctity. The uprising of Abu 'Abd Allah possessed all the charatertistics that make an uprising sacred, so much so that it is without a parallel in the entire history of the world. What are those characteristics?

1. The first condition of a sacred movement is that it should not have a purpose and end that is personal and pertaining to the individual but one which is universal, covering the entire humanity and human species. At times persons make uprisings for personal goals, and sometimes they may launch a movement for the sake of society, or for the sake of mankind, for the sake truth, or for the sake of justice, equality and monotheism, and not for some personal goal. In such cases the struggle and movement is no longer for a personal cause. One who wages such a struggle represents all human beings. That is why men whose actions and movements were not for the sake of personal motives and for the sake of humanity or for the sake of truth, justice and equality, and for the sake of tawhid and knowledge of God and for the sake of faith, are honored and loved by all people. And that is why the Prophet (S) said: "Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn" [3] We also say, "Husayn is from us and we from Husayn." Why? Because Imam Husayn, may Peace be upon him, took a stand 1328 years ago[4] for our sake and for the sake of all mankind. His uprising was sacred and holy and it transcended personal goals. **2**. The second condition for an uprising to be sacred is that it should be inspired by a powerful vision and insight. To explain, suppose there is a society who people are unaware, ignorant, and without understanding. There appears among them a man of vision and understanding who understands their ailments and their remedies a hundred time better than they do. At a time when others fail to understand and see, the man of vision sees very early and distinctly what other people fail to see at all. He comes forward and takes a stand. Years pass. Twenty, thirty or fifty years later the people wake up and find out why he had risen up and they understand the sacred goals that he had sought to attain whose value and worth was not visible to their fathers and ancestors twenty, forty or fifty years ago.

To give an example, the marhum Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi [Afghani] launched an Islamic movement about sixty or seventy years ago in the Muslim countries (his death occurred in 1310 H./1892-93, fourteen years before the Constitution Movement in Iran). When you read today the history of this man, you see that he was truly a lone and solitary figure. He knew the maladies of Muslims and their remedy while the people themselves did not. He was insulted and ridiculed by the people and they did not support him. Now after sixty or seventy years when the facts of history have become clearer we see that he understood things at that time which the people of Iran, ninety-nine out of a hundred, did not. Read at least two of the letters written by this great man. One of them was written to the marhum Ayatullah Mirza Shirazi Buzurg, may God elevate his station. The other was an open letter to the 'ulama' of Iran and is like a manifesto. Or read the letters written by him to marhum Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Bujnardi at Mashhad, or to a certain eminent scholar of Isfahan or Shiraz. See how well he understood the problems and how clearly he saw things, how well he knew the character of colonialism and what effective measures he took for awakening this ummah (pay no attention to things that are still said about him by some agents of colonialism, for as the proverb goes, 'this henna has lost its colour'!). His movement was sacred because it was launched by a man who appeared during a difficult era and who saw the reality behind the appearances which was invisible to and hardly understood by his contemporaries.

The movement of Imam Husayn is such a movement. Today we understand fully the character of Yazid and the implications of his rule. We know what Mu'awiyah did and what were the schemes of the Umayyads. But the Muslims of that era, ninety-nine out of a hundred, did not understand these things, especially due to the absence of the media of the mass communication media which exist nowadays. The people of Madinah did not understand the situation that existed. They came to know the character of Yazid and the implications of his caliphate when Husayn ibn 'Ali was killed. They were shocked and they asked themselves why he had been killed. They sent a delegation to Syria consisting of some eminent persons of Madinah and led by a man named 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah, known as "Ghasil al-Mala'ikah." Making the journey from Madinah to Syria when they reached Yazid's court, after staying there for some time they came to know the realities of the situation. On returning to Madinah they were asked as to what they had seen. They said, "All that we can tell you is that so long as we were in Damascus we were afraid lest stones should rain on our heads from the heaven." They told them they had seen a caliph who drank wine openly, gambled, and played with hounds and monkeys and had incestuous relations with women of his family.

Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah had eight sons. He said to his townsmen, "Whether you rise up or not, I will make an uprising even if I have to do it alone with my sons." He fulfilled his words. In the uprising of Harrah against Yazid he sent forth his sons to fight. They were martyred and he himself was martyred after them. 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah was not aware of the conditions two or three years earlier when Imam Husayn departed from Madinah. Where was he at the time when Husyan, as he prepared to leave Madinah, was saying:

> One should bid farewell to Islam when the ummah is afflicted with such a ruler as Yazid?

Husayn ibn 'Ali had to be killed and the Muslim world had to receive a shock so that the likes of 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah, the Ghasil al-Mala'ikah, and hundreds of people like him in Madinah, Kufah, and other places may open their eyes and say that Husayn ('a) was right in saying what he said. **3**. The third characteristic of a sacred movement is its solitary and exclusive character; that is, it is like a flash of lightening in total darkness, a cry in the wilderness of silence, and a movement in the sea of absolute stillness. In conditions of total repression when the people cannot speak out, when there is total darkness, despair, absence of hope, and absolute silence and stillness, there appears suddenly a man and he breaks the magic silence and stillness. He makes a movement and it is like a flash of light in the midst of surrounding darkness. It is then that others begin to stirr and gradually start moving behind him and following him. Wasn't the uprising of Husayn such a movement? Yes, it was. Such was the movement that Imam Husayn launched. But what were his objectives in launching it? Why were the Infallible Imams so insistent that the tradition of mourning Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a) should always remain alive? There is no need for us to look far for the reasons. Husayn ibn 'Ali himself has declared the reasons behind his movement:

> Indeed, I have not risen up to do mischief, neither as an adventurer, nor to

> cause corruption and tyranny. I have risen up solely to seek the reform of the Ummah of my grandfather (s).

He says in most explicit terms: "Our society has become corrupt and the ummah of my Grandfather has become degenerate. I have risen up to carry out reform and I am a reformer."

> I want to command what is good and stop what is wrong, and (in this) I follow the conduct of my grandfather and my father, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

> Don't you see that righteousness is not acted upon and vice goes unforbidden. In such a situation, the man of faith yearns for the meeting with his Lord ... I see death as nothing but felicity and life under oppressors as nothing but disgrace.

Imam Husayn ('a) says, "I have risen up to carry out amr bil ma'ruf, to revive the faith, and to struggle against corruption. My movement is one which is Islamic and aimed at reform."

But what we say is something else. We have made two skillful manipulations which are very amazing (I don't know whether I should say skillful or ignorant). In one of these cases, we said that Husayn ibn 'Ali rose in order to be killed for the sake of the atonement of the sins of the ummah. Now if someone were to ask us as to the source of this notion, whether it was Imam Husayn ('a) himself who said such a thing or if it was the Prophet or some Imam, we cannot cite any authority. But still we keep on insisting that Imam Husayn got killed so that our sins are atoned. I don't know whether we have borrowed this notion from Christianity. Muslims have unwittingly adopted many ideas from Christendom which are contrary to Islam.

One of the doctrines of Christianity is the notion of the crucifixion of Christ as a sacrifice made for the sake of the atonement of man's sins. Jesus is called 'the Sacrifice,' and it is an essential part of the Christian doctrine that Jesus went upon the cross for atoning the sins of his people. They have made Jesus carry the burden of their sins! However, we did not suspect that this notion belongs to Christianity and that it is consistent neither with the spirit of Islam nor with the statements of Husayn ('a) himself. By God, it is a calumny if we ascribe such a thing to Aba 'Abd Allah ('a)! By God, should one attribute such a notion to Husayn ibn 'Ali while he is keeping a fast in the month of Ramadan and claim that Husayn's martyrdom was for the sake of such a purpose and should he ascribe such a statement to him, his fast would be void for ascribing a falsehood to the Imam. Abu 'Abd Allah rose to struggle against sin, whereas we said that he rose in order to be a refuge for sinners!

We claim that Imam Husayn founded an insurance company to guarantee security to sinners! He has insured us against the consequences of sin in return for our tears. All that we have to do is to shed tears for him and in return he guarantees immunity to the sinners. Now one

could be whatever one liked to be, one could be an Ibn Ziyad or 'Umar ibn Sa'd, as if one 'Umar ibn Sa'd, one Sinan ibn Anas, and one Khuli were not enough! Imam Husayn wanted that the likes of Khuli and 'Umar ibn Sa'd should proliferate in the world and so he came and announced: 'O people, be as evil as you can be, for I am your security!"

There is a second misrepresentation involved in interpreting the event of Karbala'. According to it, Imam Husayn made an uprising and was killed in order to carry out a special command that was solely addressed to him. He was told to go and get martyred. So his action does not relate to us and it is not something which can be followed and emulated: it does not relate to those precepts of Islam which are general and universal.

See, what a great difference there is between what the Imam declares and what we say! Imam Husayn cried out that the causes and motives of his uprising are matters that coincide with the general principles of Islam. There was no need for a special order. After all special orders are given in situations where the general prescription is not adequate. Imam Husayn declared in unequivocal terms that Islam is a religion that does not permit any believer (he did not say, an Imam) to remain indifferent in the face of oppression, injustice, perversity and sin. Imam Husayn established a practical ideology which is the same as the ideology of Islam. Islam had set forth its principles and Husayn put them into effect. We have divested this event of its ideological character. When it is shorn of its ideological character, it is no more capable of being followed, and when it can not be followed, one cannot make any use of Imam Husayn's teaching and draw any lesson from the event of Karbala'. We have rendered this event barren from the viewpoint of being beneficial and useful. Could there be a worse kind of treachery? This is the reason why I say that the distortion in the meaning of the event of 'Ashura' is a hundred times more dangerous than textual corruption.

Why did the Infallible Imams (and there are even traditions from the Noble Messenger in this regard) want this movement to be kept alive? that it should not be consigned to oblivion?-that the people should mourn Imam Husayn? What was the objective that led them to issue this command? We have distorted that objective, declaring that their only goal was that the mourning ceremonies are to be held for the sake of offering consolation to Hadrat Zahra', may Peace be upon her. Although she is with her great son in Paradise, we imagine that she is continually restless and full of sorrow, so she should be given consolation by the mourning of such worthless people as us! Can there be a greater insult of Hadrat Zahra' than this notion?

Some others say that Imam Husayn was murdered without any guilt at Karbala' at the hands of a group of aggressors and this was a tragedy. It is true that Imam Husayn was killed without any guilt. But is this all there is to the event that an innocent person was murdered by a group of aggressors!? Every day a thousand innocent persons are killed and wiped out throughout the world by criminals, and this is of course a tragic fact. But does this kind of death have such a value that one should go on expressing sorrow over it and continue to mourn it year after year, for years, or rather for centuries, for ten and twenty centuries, expressing sorrow and regretting that Husayn ibn 'Ali was killed without guilt and that his

innocent blood was shed for no reason by aggressors? But who can dare say that Husayn ibn 'Ali's death was in vain and his blood was shed futilely? If one can find anyone in the whole world who did not allow one drop of his blood to be wasted, that is Husayn ibn 'Ali. If you can find anyone in the whole world who did not let one particle of his personality to go waste it is Husayn ibn 'Ali. He set such a high value for every single drop of his blood that it is indescribable! If you take into account the amount of wealth that has been and is spent for his sake and will continue to be spent until the day of Judgment, you will see that humanity has spent billions and trillions for every drop of his blood. Can anyone say that a man wasted his life whose death, for ever and ever, sends out tremors through the castles of the oppressors?- that his blood went in vain? Is his martyrdom to be saddening for us because Husayn ibn 'Ali was killed in vain? It is we, wretched and ignorant people that we are, I and you, whose lives go waste. We should grieve for ourselves! You insult Husayn ibn Ali when you say that his life was lost in vain! Husayn ibn 'Ali is someone about whom it is said.

> Indeed you have a station with God which cannot be attained except through martyrdom.

Did Husayn ibn 'Ali desire to die a vain death when he aspired for martyrdom?

The Imams have exhorted us to keep alive the tradition of mourning over Husayn ibn Ali because his goal was a sacred goal. Husayn ibn 'Ali established a school, and they wanted his school to remain alive and flourish.

You will not find a practical school of thought in the whole world that may be likened to that of Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a). If you can find a single another example of Husayn ibn 'Ali, you may ask why we should revive his memory every year. If you can find another example of that which was manifested in Husayn ibn 'Ali during the event of 'Ashura', in those ordeals and taxing conditions, of the meaning of twahid, of faith, of the knowledge of God, of perfection, convinced faith in the other world, of resignation and submission, of fortitude and manliness, of self contentment, of steadiness and steadfastness, of honor and dignity, of the love and quest for freedom, of concern for mankind, of the passion to serve humanity-if you can find a single example in the whole world, then you may question the need to refresh his memory every year. But he is unique and without a parallel.

Keeping alive the memory of his name and his movement is for the purpose that our spirits may be illumined by the light of the spirit of Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a).

If a tear that we shed for him should signify a harmony between our souls and his spirit, it represent a brief flight that our spirit makes along with Husayn's spirit. Should it create within us a little glow of his valor, a particle of his free nature, a particle of his faith, a particle of his piety, and a small spark of his tawhid, such a tear has an infinite value. They have said that it has the worth an entire world even if it is so small as the 'wing of a gnat.' Believe it! But that

is nor a tear shed for a pointless death, but a tear for the greatness of Husayn and his great spirit, a tear that signifies harmony with Husayn ibn 'Ali and of movement in his steps. Yes, such a tear has an incalculable worth even if it is so small as a gnat's wing.

They wanted this practical ideology to remain for ever before the people's view, to witness that the Prophet's family are a proof and testimony of the truthfulness of the Prophet himself. If it is said that a certain Muslim warrior displayed great faith and valor in such and such a battle against Iran or Byzantine, for instance, it is not so much of an evidence of the Prophet's truthfulness as when it is said that the Prophet's son did such and such an act. A leader's family is always subject to more suspicion and doubt than any of his followers. But when we observe the family of the Prophet at the highest summit of faith and sincerity, that is the best evidence of the Prophet's truthfulness. No one was so close to the Prophet (S) like 'Ali ('a). He grew up by the Prophet's side. No one had a faith in the Prophet like him or was more dedicated to the Prophet. This is the first evidence of the Prophet's truthfulness. Husayn is the Prophet's son. When he manifests his faith in the Prophet's teaching it is a manifestation of the Prophet himself. Things which are always declared by human beings verbally but are rarely observed in practice are clearly visible in Husayn's being. What makes a human being so undefeatable? Subhan Allah! See the heights to which a human being can rise! See how undefeatable is the spirit of the human being whose body bears wounds from head to foot, his young sons have been cut to pieces before his very eyes, he is suffering from extreme thirst and when he looks up at the sky it appears dark in his eyes, he sees that the members of his family will be taken captive, he has lost all that he had and all that has remained for him is his own undefeatable spirit.

Show me such a spectacle of human greatness in an event other than Karbala' and I will celebrate its memory instead of Karbala! Accordingly, we should keep alive the memory of such an event, of a group of seventy-two persons who defeated the spirit of a host of thirty thousand. How did they inflict such a defeat? Firstly, though a minority facing certain death, not a single one of them pined the enemy's side. Yet some men from the thirty thousand pined their ranks, including one of their commanders, Hurr ibn Yazid Riyahi and another thirty. This indicates the moral victory of this group and the defeat of the other one. 'Umar ibn Sa'd took certain measures in Karbala' which disclose his moral defeat. In Karbala' 'Umar ibn Sa'd's men refrained from a man-to-man encounter during the battle. At first they complied in accordance with the custom prevalent in those days, before launching an all-out attack and shooting arrows. The man-to-man fight was a kind of contest in which one man from one side fought a man from the other. After several men were killed in these encounters with the companions of Imam Husayn, strengthening their morale, 'Umar ibn Sa'd ordered his men to refrain from man-to-man fights.

When did Abu 'Abd Allah come to the field for the final battle? Imagine, it is afternoon on the day of 'Ashura'. Until this time there were still several of his companions who offered the prayers with him. He has been very busy from the morning until the afternoon of that day as it was he, most of the time, who has brought the bodies of his companions from the battlefield

and placed them in the tent of the martyrs. He himself has rushed to the side of his companions in their last moments and it is he himself who consoles and reassures his family members. Apart from all this, there is his personal grief for the dear ones that he has lost. He is the last of all to come into the field of battle. They imagine that it would be a simple task to deal with Husayn in such a circumstance. But he does not give a moment's reprieve to any contestant that dares to come forward to combat him. 'Umar ibn Sa'd then cries out: "Woe to you! Do you know whom you are fighting? This is the son of the most fatal of Arab warriors. He is the son of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. By God, his father's soul is in his body. Don't fight him singly!"

Wasn't this an indication of defeat? Thirty thousand men combat against a single man, lonely and solitary, who has suffered all those sorrows and ordeals., and who has been through the arduous and grueling labors of the day, thirsty and hungry, and he defeats them and makes them flee.

They faced a defeat not only against the sword of Abu 'Abd Allah but also his logic and eloquence. Abu 'Abd Allah delivered two or three sermons on the day of 'Ashura' before the commencement of his battle. These sermons are truly amazing. Those who practice the act of oration know that it is not possible for someone in an ordinary state to say things which are sublime or at the height of sublimity. One's spirit must be in a state of fervour, especially if the oration is of an elegiac character. It is only with a heart burning with feeling that one can deliver a good elegy. If one wants to compose a ghazal, he must be strongly moved with the passion of love so as to say a good ghazal. If one wishes to compose epic poetry, he must be moved with warlike emotions.

When Abu 'Abd Allah began his address, especially the sermon that he made on the day of 'Ashura', which is one of the most elaborate of his sermons, 'Umar ibn Sa'd was alarmed by the effect it might have on his men's morale. The Imam alighted from his horse and mounted a camel in order to make the sermon, as he wanted to make his voice heard better from a higher point.[5]

Words, which are truly reminiscent of the sermons of 'Ali ('a). Aside from the sermons of 'Ali we won't find a more powerful and vibrant sermon in the whole world. He spoke three times. 'Umar ibn Sa'd was frightened lest Husayn's sermon should change the minds of his troops. The second time when Abu 'Abd Allah started to address them, due to the defeatist morale of the enemy, Umar ibn Sad ordered his men to hoot and beat their mouth with their hands so that no one could hear Husayn. Is that not an evidence of their defeat and the sign of Husyan's victory?

If a man has faith in God, in tawhid, if he has a link with God and faith in the other world, single-handedly he can inflict a moral defeat on a host of twenty and thirty thousand. Is this not a lesson for us? Where can you find another example of it? Who else can you find in the

whole world who could utter two sentences of that sermon in conditions in which Husayn ibn 'All spoke, or for that matter two sentences like the sermon of Zaynab ('a) at the city gates of Kufah? If our Imams have told us to revive this mourning every year and to keep it alive for ever it is for the purpose that we may understand these points, that we may realize the greatness of Husayn, so that if we shed tears for him it is out of understanding.

Our knowledge of Husayn elevates us. It makes us human beings, free men, followers of truth and justice, and real Muslims. The school of Husayn is a man-making school, not a school that produces sinners. Husayn is the bastion of righteous conduct, not a citadel for sin and sinfulness.

The historians report that at daybreak on the day of 'Ashura', after offering the prayer with his companions, he turned to them and said, "Companions, get prepared. Death is nothing but a bridge that takes you across this world into another, from a world that is very coarse, hard and base to one that is sublime, noble and gentle." These were his words. But now observe his conduct. The reports do not come from Husayn ibn 'All but from those who have chronicled the events. The episode has been reported even by Hilal ibn Nafi', who was accompanying 'Umar ibn Sa'd as his chronicler. He says, al Husayn ibn 'Ali was astonishing to me. As the time of his martyrdom drew nearer and his ordeals became severer, his countenance appeared to be more refreshed and ruddier, like someone about to meet his beloved."

Even in the last moments when that accursed wretch approached him to sever his sacred head, he says, "When I approached Husayn ibn 'Ali and my eyes fell on him, the light and burnish of his face so gripped me that I forgot my intention to kill him:

> The light of his face and its awe-inspiring beauty so gripped me that I was distracted from the thought of killing him.

They write that Abu Abd Allah had chosen a point for his combat which was nearer the tents of the womenfolk. That was for two reasons. Firstly, he knew the unmanly and inhuman character of the enemies. They lacked even the sense of honor to spare the tents of their attacks as it was he whom they were fighting. Therefore he wanted to restrain them from attacking his camp so long as he was alive and had the strength to stop them. He would make a frontal attack and they would flee. But he would not pursue them but return to guard the tents of his womenfolk from any assault. Secondly, so long as he was alive he wanted the members of his family to know that he was alive. Accordingly, he had chosen a point from where his voice could be heard by them. Whenever he returned after making an attack he would stand at that point and cry out:

> There is no power or strength save that which derives from God, the Exalted and the Almighty.

His cries would reassure the women who knew that the Imam was still alive. The Imam had told them not to come out of the tents as long as he was alive (Don't believe those who say that the women kept running out every now and then. Never. The Imam had ordered them to remain in the tents as long as he was alive). He had told them that they must not make any untoward utterance which might reduce their reward with God. He had told them that they would find deliverance and that their ultimate end would be a good one, that God will punish their enemies. They did not have the Imam's permission to come out of their tents, and they did not. Husayn ibn Ali's sense of manly honor and their own sense of feminine honor did not permit them to come out. Accordingly, when they heard the Imam utter 'La hawl wala quwatta illa billahil aliyyil azim', they felt reassured. And as the Imam had come back to them once or twice after bidding them farewell, they still expected the Imam to return.

In those days they used to train Arabic horses for the battlefield, as the horse is an animal that can be trained. Such a horse would show a particular reaction when its master were killed. The members of Abu 'Abd Allah's household were in the tents awaiting the Imam, that he might return to them once again and they might see his angelic visage one again. Suddenly they heard the sound of the neighing of the Imam's horse. They rushed to the tent's door imagining that the Imam had come. But they saw the horse without its rider with its saddle overturned. It was then that the children and the women raised the cries of Wa Husaynah! and Wa Muhammada! They surrounded the horse and each of them began to mourn for him. Mourning is part of human nature. When a person wants to express his grief he mournfully addresses the heaven, or an animal, or some person. The Imam had told them that they must not weep or lament so long as he was alive. But of course they could mourn him when he died. And so in that state they began their lamentations.

They write that Husayn ibn 'Ali had a daughter named Sukaynah, whom he loved greatly. Later she grew up to become a learned lady of letters much revered and respected by all scholars and literary men. This child was very dear to Abu 'Abd Allah ('a) and she too had an unusual love for her father. They write that this child uttered some sentences in the way of mourning which are very heartrending. In a mournful tone she addressed the horse and said:

> O my father's stallion, my father was thirsty when he went out. Did they give him water or was he killed thirsty?'

That was at the time when Abu 'Abd Allah lay fallen on the ground.

Continued in part 4 ...

Notes to part 3:

[1] al Halabi, Sirah v2, p77

[2] Musnad, Ahmad b. Hanbal, v2, p199

[3] al Mufid, al Irshad, p249, Alam al Wara, p216, Ibn Shahr Ashub, al Manaqib, v4, p71, Hilyat al abrar, v1, p560, Kashf al Ghummah, v2 pp10,61, Mulhaqt Ihqaq al haqq, v11, pp 256-279

[4] This sermon was delivered in the year 1389 H, corresponding to Farvardin 1348 (March-April 1969)

[5] al Masudi, Muruj al Dhahab, v3, p69

'Ashura - Popular Distortions and our Responsibility

Fourth Sermon

Martyr Murtada Mutahhari

Translated from the Persian by 'Ali Quli Qara'i

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In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

All Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds and the Maker of all creation, and may Peace and benedictions be upon His servant and messenger, His beloved and elect, our master, our prophet, and our sire, Abu al-Qasim Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his pure, immaculate, and infallible Progeny.

I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan:

> "So for their breaking their compact We cursed them and made their hearst hard; they would pervert the words from their meanings, and they forgot a portion of what they were reminded of." (5:13)]

Our discussion concerning the distortions (tahrifat) in popular accounts of the historical event of Ashura consists of four parts:

1. The meaning of distortion (tahrif) in general.
2. A description of the distortions that have taken place in regard to the historic event of 'Ashura and their examples.
3. The factors responsible for these distortions and the causes that lead to tahrif in general and the special factors that have been particularly at play in relation to this historic

event.

4. Our responsibility' in regard to these distortions, that is, the 'duty of the 'ulama' as well as that of the common people.

Of these four, we have already discussed the first three parts in the previous sessions, and tonight, with God's grace, we will discuss the fourth topic.

To be certain, during the course of time gradually there have taken place distortions in this very great historic event, and there is no doubt that here we have a responsibility: to combat these distortions. To state it more clearly, and to put it in somewhat self-important terms, it may be said that our generation has a mission to fight against these distortions and in misrepresentations of 'Ashura. But before we may discuss the responsibility of the scholars of the ummah (in other words, the khawass) and the responsibility of the people (that is, the 'awamm), I would like to mention two points in the way of introduction.

The first point is that we should examine the past to see who has been responsible for these distortions, whether it were the scholars who were responsible for it or the common people. Next, what is our responsibility to today and who is to shoulder it?

Who has been responsible for it in the past? Usually in such cases the 'ulama blame the people and the people put the blame on the 'ulama. The 'uIama say that the guilt lies with the people and their ignorance. They are so ignorant, ill-informed and un-worthy that they only deserve to be fed with such nonsense. They do not deserve to know the truth and the facts.

I heard it from the marhum Ayatullah Sadr, may God elevate his station, that Taj Nayshaburi would say absurd things from the minbar. Someone objected to him, saying, "What are these things that you say? You receive such big audiences, why don't you say some sensible things?" He replied that the people did not deserve it. Then he produced, so to speak, a 'proof' to substantiate his assertion.

The common people, the masses, also have an argument against the 'ulama and the clerics which they often use. They say, "When a fish begins to rot, the rotting begins at the head. The scholars are like the head of the fish and we its tail." However, the fact is that in this case the responsibility and the guilt lies both upon the 'ulama as well as the laity.

One should know that the common people too share a responsibility in such cases. In cases such as this, it is the people who let the truth to be obliterated and spread superstitious nonsense.

There is a well-known tradition which is considered reliable by scholars. A man asked Imam Sadiq (a) concerning the Qur'anic verse:

> And among them are the illiterate folks who know not the Book but only vain hopes and nothing but conjectures. (2:78)

Here God is critical of the common people from among the Jews. Although He refers to them as having been uneducated, unlettered and illiterate, nevertheless He considers them blameworthy. The questioner, while admitting that the 'ulama' of the Jews' were indeed responsible, asks the Imam as to why the common people among them were held guilty. Was it not a valid excuse that they were illiterate commoners? The tradition is an elaborate one. The Imam replies that such is not the case. He answers that there are certain matters that do require learning and which can only be understood by the learned and which illiterate people do not comprehend. Concerning such issues one may say that the common people are not responsible as they have not acquired learning in religious subjects. True, at times they may be held responsible for not having acquired education, and this could be an argument against them. However, if there are cases where they have no responsibility, that is in issues which require the study of books and proper instruction under teachers. One who has never had any teacher and has never gone to school is not held responsible in such matters. However, there are issues which a normal human being can understand with his natural faculty of a sound mind. Here it is not necessary for one to have gone to the school, to have read books and have had teachers. In other words, it does [not] require one to have a diploma or a degree or even to have received middle-school education. All that is needed is sanity and a sound mind. Thereafter, the Imam gives an example. Suppose there is an 'alim who preaches the people to be pious and Godfearing while he himself acts in a manner contrary to piety and Godfearing. He preaches what he himself does notpractice and the people observe this contradiction between his word and deed. The Imam points out that it is not necessary for one to be educated and learned in order to see that such men are not worthy of being followed. The common people among the Jews would observe these things with their own eyes and understand them with their minds (wadtarru bi ma'arifi qulubihim). [1] With their natural intelligence they could perceive that one must not follow such persons, but in spite of that they would follow them. Therefore they were responsible and guilty.

There are some matters that do not require any education or training or any linguistic expertise in any particular language such as Arabic or Persian or any training in any of such subjects as grammar, law, jurisprudence, logic or philosophy. All that is needed is the natural gift of intelligence and they (the common people among the Jews) did possess this. They perceived these things with their natural intelligence. The Noble Prophet (s) has a saying which is one of the profoundest because of its innate self-evident character. He said:

> The value of works depends solely on intentions, and everyone's recompense depends on his intentions. [2]

It means that the significance and worth of one's actions depends on one's intentions. If you do something unintentionally you are not guilty if it is something bad and if it is something

good you do not deserve any reward.

Now if someone were to come and relate a dream and a story about someone who is forgiven his sins and admitted to the highest stations of paradise due to something that happened to him ina condition of unconsciousness in which his will and intention had played no role whatsoever, or rather his real intentions were quite the opposite, should we accept such a thing? Does it require book learning? Does it need literacy or the knowledge of Arabic? Only repentance and a return to God can free one from his sins:

> Verily good deeds obliterate evil deeds. (11:114)

It is good deeds that wipe out the traces left by evil deeds. But involuntary actions are not such. However, 'we fail to use our God-given intelligence to make correct judgements.

In some books they have written that once upon a time there was a robber who used to waylay travellers, rob them and kill them. One day he came to know that a caravan of pilgrims bound for the holy shrine in Karbala was on its way. He came and hid himself in a mountain pass lying there in wait to waylay the pilgrims bound for the shrine of Imam Husayn, to rob them of their belongings and to kill them if necessary. While he waited for the caravan to reach, suddenly he fell asleep. The caravan came and passed by while he remained asleep. In that state he saw a dream. It was the scene of the day of resurrection and he was being taken towards hell. Why? Because he had not performed a single good deed in his life. All he had done was wickedness and crime. He was taken to the verge of hell but hell refused to accept him. Why? Because as this man slept by the wayside as the pilgrim caravan passed, the dust raised by the feet of the pilgrims of Imam Husayn's shrine had settled on his body and clothes. As a result of this involuntary act all his sins were forgiven without his having any conscious intention, or rather despite his intention to kill the pilgrims, and contrary to the declaration of the Prophet that "the value of actions depends solely on intentions, and everyone's recompense depends on his intentions." [There is even a couplet that has been composed on the theme.]

> Indeed, hell shall not touch a body, whereupon lies the dust of the feet of Husayn's pilgrims!

It is a nice line poetically, but is unfortunately untrue from the viewpoint of the teaching of Imam Husayn.

The second point, which I must mention before describing this responsibility and duty relates to the dangers that lie in these distortions. Let us briefly discuss the dangers that lie in distortion of facts. We have already discussed the various kinds of distortion that have occurred in relation to the historic event of 'Ashura and the factors responsible for such distortions. It is possible that some people might think, 'After all what is wrong with tahrif?'

What harm can it do and how can it create any danger?' The answer is that the danger of tahrif is extraordinarily great. Tahrif is an indirect blow which is more effective than a direct one. If a book is corrupted (whether in respect of its wording, or its meaning and content) and it is a book of guidance, it is transformed into a book that is misleading. If it is a book of human felicity it is transformed into a book of human wretchedness. If it is a book that edifies and elevates human beings, as a result of corruption it is changed into one that brings man's fall and degeneration. Basically it alters the very form of reality and not only makes it ineffective it has a reverse effect.

Everything is prone to certain hazards which are related to its nature. The Noble Prophet (s) said:

> There are three hazards for religion: the scholar of evil conduct, the tyrannical leader (ruler), and the person who is diligent in practising religion but is ignorant. [3]

That is, there are three dangers for religion: 1) scholars who are evil and vicious in their conduct; 2) leaders who are tyrannical and unjust; 3) devout persons who are ignorant. The Prophet has considered them hazards for the faith. In the same way that plants and animals are affected by certain pests and diseases, and in the same way as the human body is prone to certain diseases and disorders, religion, creed and faith are also prone to certain dangers. Distortions of the faith, which are brought about by two out of the three categories of people mentioned by the Noble Prophet, that is, scholars of evil conduct and ignorant and sanctimonious persons, are a hazard for the faith and are destructive for religion. Corruption and distortion alter the content of a message of deliverance and the people who accept it as the truth derive an opposite result.

Ali (a), a figure with all that greatness, has a strangely distorted personality in the outlook of some people. Some people know Ali (a) only as an athlete. At times some people of very suspect motives publish pictures of Ali that show him bearing in hand a two-tongued sword, like a pythons tongue, and with facial features and expression one does not know from where they have got them. It is definite that a picture or statue of Ali or that of the Prophet never existed. They have painted such a strange face that one can hardly believe that it is the same Ali famous for his justice, the Ali who wept at nights for the fear of God. The face of a devout man, of someone who is used to nightly worship, of someone who engages in istighfar at nights, the face of a sage, a judge, a man of letters is a different face.

There is another thing which is quite popular especially amongst us Iranians. We refer to the Fourth Imam (a) as "Imam Zayn al-'Abidin-e Bimar" (i.e. the sick one). In no language do we ever come across the epithet bimar along with the name of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin. Such an epithet does not exist in Arabic. He has a number of appellations, one of which is al-Sajjad (i.e. one who prostrates a lot), another is Dhu al-Thafanat (i.e. one who has callouses on his

forehead, due to prostrations). Do you find any book in Arabic that may contain an epithet synonymous with the word bimar for the Imam? Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a) was only ill during the days of the episode of 'Ashura (perhaps it was an act of providence meant to save the Imam's life and to preserve the progeny of Imam Husayn) and this very illness saved his life. Several times they wanted to kill the Imam, but as he was seriously ill, they would leave him saying, Innahu li-ma bih [4] i.e., Why should we kill him. He is himself dying. Who in the world has not fallen ill at some time or another during his life? Apart from this instance of his illness, see if you can find any other reference stating that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin was sick. But we have pictured Imam Zayn al-'Abidin as someone chronically ill, pale faced, suffering from fever and as someone bent with weakness and always carrying a walking stick and someone who moans as he walks !

The same distortion and lie about the Imam's figure has led some people to continually groan and moan and make themselves appear as chronically sick so that people may revere them for that and say, "Look at him, he is just like Imam Zayn al-'Abidin the Bimar!" This is distortion. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin was not any different from Imam Husayn (a) or Imam Baqir (a) in respect of physical health and constitution. The Imam lived for forty years after the event of Karbala' and he was quite healthy like others and was not different from Imam Sadiq (a), for instance, in this regard. Why should we then call him "Imam Zayn al-'Abidin the Bimar" [5]

Imamate means being a inodel and an exemplar. The philosophy of the Imam's existence is that he is a human being of a superhuman calibre, like the prophets, who introduced themselves in these words so that the people may follow them as higher models of humanity:

> I am only a mortal like you, (and) it has been revealed to me that your God is One God. (18:110)

However, when the countenance of these figures is distorted to a great degree they are no more capable of serving as models. That is, instead of being beneficial, following and emulating such imaginary figures gives an opposite result. Thus we have seen briefly the great danger that lies in tahrif. Actually tahrif is an indirect blow and a stab in the back.

The Jews are the world champion of tahrif. No people in world history have carried out tahrif to the extent that they have done. For the same reason no one has ever delivered a great blow to humanity by distorting facts and fabricating falsehoods.

Our Responsibility and Mission:

You should know that we have a serious responsibility in this regard, especially in the present times. One cannot serve the people with a distorted version of the truth, neither was it possible in the past. It was unproductive also in the past, but its harm was lesser. Its harm is

much greater in this era. Our greatest responsibility is to see what distortions have occurred in our history; to see what distortions have occurred in the presentation of our eminent figures and personalities, and what misinterpretations have occurred in the Qur'an. There has been no textual corruption in the Qur'an. It means that not a single word has been added to it nor a word has been deleted from it. However, the danger of distortion of the meanings of the Qur'an is as serious as any textual corruption. What is meant by distortion of meanings of the Qur'an? It means interpreting the Qur'an in a wrong and misleading manner. Such a thing should not be permitted to take place. We should see what kind of distortions have taken place in our history in historical episodes such as the historic event of 'Ashura, which must always remain a source of lesson and education for us, being a document of moral and social training and education. We should combat such distortions.

The Duty of the 'Ulama and the People:

What is the duty of the 'ulama' of the Ummah in this regard and the duty of the common people, the masses?

I want to make a general remark concerning the responsibility of the ulama'. The deviation of an 'alim lies in always confronting passively the weak points and shortcomings of the people. Spiritual, moral and social weak points are a kind of sickness. In bodily illness the sick person is usually conscious of his illness and he himself seeks his own treatment. But in spiritual illnesses that which makes things difficult is that the sick person does not know that he is sick. On the contrary he considers his illness a sign of health. He even has a liking for his illness. It is not the case that individuals are conscious of their weak points and accept them as such; rather they consider them as their strong points! It is the 'alim who understands the weak points of his community

When an 'alim is faced with a weak point of the community he has two alternatives before him:

1) He may struggle against these weak points, and such a person is called a reformer (muslih). A reformer is one who fights against the weak points of the people. The people usually do not like him.

2) He may consider it a difficult and formidable task to combat the weak points of the people. He may conclude that there is not only no reward to be obtained in fighting the people's weak points, but there are also disadvantages. Accordingly, he exploits their weakness. It is here that he becomes an instance of 'the vicious scholar' (faqih fajir) who according to the Noble Prophet (s) is one of the three hazards and pestilences of the faith.

I will not discuss other problems here but will confine myself to the issue of the event of 'Ashura. The common people have two weak points in relation to the mourning ceremonies

held for Imam Husayn (a). One of them is that - to the extent I have come across in my own experience (and I have not yet encountered any exception) - usually those who arrange and organize the mourning gatherings (majalis), whether they are held in mosques or at homes, want the majalis to draw good attendance. They are satisfied if there is a substantial crowd and are unhappy if the attendance is sparse. This is a weak point. These sessions are not held to draw crowds. Our purpose is not to hold a parade or a march past. The purpose is to become acquainted with the truths and to fight against distortions. This ia a weak point which the speaker has to reckon with. Should he fight this weak point or should he exploit it like Taj Nayshaburi? Should he wish to combat this weak point it would not be compatible with the objectives of the organizers and holders of the majlis as well as with the wishes of the audience who like to get together and love tumult and fanfare. Should he want to exploit this weak point then all that may bother him is how to draw larger crowds. It is here that an 'alim stands at a crossroad: now that these people are fools and have such a weak point, should I exploit it, or should I struggle against it and go after the truth?

Another weak point present in the mourning gatherings - which is mostly from the people's side and has fortunately become lesser - is that profuse and loud weeping is regarded as the criterion of their success. After all the speaker on the minbar must relate the sorrowful accounts of the tragic events. While these accounts are related, the people are expected not merely to shed tears: the mere shedding of tears is not acceptable; the majlis must be rocked with cries of mourning. I do not say that the majlis should not be rocked with mourning; what I say is that this must not be the objective. If tears are shed as a result of listening to facts and the majlis is rocked with mourning by descriptions of real history without false and fabricated narratives, without distortion, without conjuring companions for Imam Husayn that did not exist in history and who are unknown to Imam Husayn himself (as they were nonexistent), without attributing such children to Imam Husayn as did not exist, without carving out enemies for Imam Husayn that basically had not existed - that is very good indeed. But when reality and truth are absent, should we go on making war against Imam Husayn by fabricating falsehoods and lies?

This is a weak point of the common people. What is to be done? Should it be exploited? Should we exploit it for our interests and take them for a ride? Should we, like Taj Nayshaburi, say that as the people are stupid, we should make use of their stupidity? No! Our greatest responsibility and the 'ulama's biggest duty is to struggle against the weak points of society. That is why that the Noble Prophet (s) said: -

> When heresies and fabrications appear in my Ummah, the 'alim must declare what he knows, otherwise he will be cursed by God.[6]

That is: when falsehoods and fabrications appear and when things become popular which are not part of the religion, things which the Prophet (s) has not prescribed, it is the duty of the learned to declare the truth even if the people do not like it. And may curse of God be upon him who hides the facts. The Noble Qur'an itself has declared in stronger terms:

> Those who conceal what We have revealed of the clear signs and guidance, after We have made them clear for the people in the Book, God shall curse them and they will be cursed by all the cursers. (2:159)

It means, the learned who conceal the truths declared by Us, who know the facts but conceal them and refrain from expressing them, may the curse of God be upon them and the curse of everyone who curses. The duty of the 'ulama during the era of the last prophesy is to struggle against tahrif. Fortunately the means for such a task are also available and there are, and have been, persons among the 'ulama who combat such weak points. The book Lu' lu' wa marjan was written on this very topic of the event of 'Ashura and I have mentioned it earlier. It is by the marhum Hajji Nuri (may God be pleased with him) and its purpose is precisely to carry out a campaign in this regard, a most sacred duty which has been fulfilled by that great man, whose work is an instance of the first part of the above-mentioned hadith:

> When heresies and fabrications appear in my Ummah, the 'alim must declare what he knows ...

It is the duty of the 'ulama to state in clear terms the facts relating to this case to the people even if they do not like it. It is the duty of the 'ulama to combat falsehoods. It is the duty of the 'ulama to expose the liars. The jurists (fuqaha) have made certain remarks concerning the issue of back-biting (ghibah). They say that there are certain exceptions where back-biting is permissible. Among cases relating to these exceptions is one where all the major 'u/ama have committed this kind of ghibah, considering it necessary and even obligatory. This is the case of jarh, where the standing of a narrator (rawi) is critically examined. Suppose a person narrates a tradition from the Prophet (s) or from one of the Imams (a). Is one to accept his statements immediately? No. One must investigate his background to see what kind of man he was, whether a truthful person or a liar. If you discover a weak point in the life of this person, a shortcoming, a defect, an instance of lying or misconduct, it is not only lawful for you but even obligatory (wajib) to discredit this person in your books. This is called jarh. Although it is ghibah and it amounts to casting disrepute on someone - which is in general not a lawful thing to do whether the subject is dead or alive - but in this case where the matter is that of distortion of the truth and its tahrif, one must discredit him and the liar must be exposed and discredited.

Someone may be a great scholar in a certain field, such as Mulla Husayn Kashifi, who was a very learned religious scholar. But his Rawdat al-shuhada is replete with lies. No one has been spared of his lies. Even Ibn Ziyad aud 'Umar ibn Sa'd are victims of his lies. He has written that Ibn Ziyad gave fifty camel-loads (kharwar) of gold to 'Umar ibn Sa'd so as to make him go to Karbala' to do what he did. (Anyone who hears such a story might think that if such is the case one cannot put much blame on 'Umar ibn Sa'd. There are many who would do such. a thing if given fifty camel-loads of gold.)

There is a general agreement about Mulla Darbandi that he was a good man. Even marhum Hajji Nuri, who criticizes his book, and with justification, says that he was a good man. This man was sincerely devoted to Imam Husayn (a) and it is said that whenever he heard Imam Husayn's name mentioned tears would come into eyes. He was also quite well-versed in fiqh and usul al-fiqh. He imagined himself to be a jurist (faqih) of the first rank. However; that was not the case. He was a jurist of second or at least third rank. He wrote a book named Khaza'in (lit. 'treasures') which is a complete course in fiqh and has been published. He was a contemporary of the author of the Jawahir (lit. 'jewels'). He asked the author of the Jawahir as to what title he had given to his book. He said, 'Jawahir.' As the title of his own book was Khaza'in, he said, "There are many of such jawahir in our khaza'in." However, the Jawahir has been reprinted ten times and there is no jurist who does not use it or can do without it. The Khaza'in was printed only once and thereafter no one went after it. Although it has a thousand pages, it is not worth more than the paper used to print it. This man, in spite of being a scholar, wrote the Asrar al-shahadah in which he has totally distorted the event of Karbala, altering it and twisting it out of shape, making it ineffective and inconsequent. His book is full of lies. Now should we keep our silence about him because he was a scholar, a pious man and devoted to Imam Husayn? Should not Hajji Nuri give his opinion abut his Asrar al-shahadah? Of course, he must be subjected to jarh and this is the duty of an 'alim.

We beseech God, the Blessed and the Exalted, to lead our hearts towards the truth, to forgive us the sins which we have committed through tahrif and otherwise, to grant us the ability to carry out successfully the duty and mission that we have in this field.

The End

Notes to part 4:

[1] Al-Tabrisi, al-Ihtijaj, vol.2, p.457.

[2] Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. 7, p. 225; al-Jami' al-saghir, vol. 1, p. 3.

[3] AI-Jami' al-saghir, vol. 1, p. 4.

[4] Bihar al-anwar, vol. 45, p. 61; A'lam al-wara, p. 246; ash-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Irshad, p. 242.

[5] In the late Ayati (r), may God have mercy upon him, we have lost an invaluable asset. Five or six years ago this great man gave a lecture on the method of tabligh in one of the monthly sessions of a religious association. It was published in the second volume of Guftar-e mah. There he raised this very issue. He said, "What is this absurd notion that we attribute sickness to Imam Zayn al-Abidin? We have given such an appellation to the Imam that anyone who hears it imagines that the Imam was sick all his life." Then he related an episode that had

occurred recently He said, "Some time ago I read an article in one of the periodicals where the author had complained about the plight of the government and government employees, stating that most of the government servants and officials were either incompetent or corrupt. They were either competent and corrupt, or honest and incompetent." He had cited verbatim the words of the author; who had written, "Most of the government officials are either of the type of Shimr or that of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin-e Bimar; whereas we need persons who are competent like Hadrat Abbas." He meant that Shimr was corrupt and competent, whereas Imam Zayn al-'Abidin-e Bimar was pious but - na'udhubillah - incompetent, and that Hadrat Abbas was both pious and competent. See how an apparently small distortion leads to such a great deviation.

[6] Safinat al-bihar, vol. 1, p. 63; Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 54.